Whose idea?

Family policy in Germany and Norway and the role of international organizations

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Abstract

A growing dissatisfaction with established explanatory frameworks of welfare state developments such as functional explanations (internal and external problem pressure), institutionalist accounts (path dependency) and political factors (parties) has made scholars apply ideational perspectives to understand recent reforms. Although family policy reforms have been investigated through idea-based explanations, scholars have neglected the role of international organizations in the ´idea game` of collecting and disseminating family policy advice. This thesis seeks to fill this void throughout its three main parts which are: a theoretical investigation of ideational factors in policy-making as well as how this can be studied; an empirical investigation of the family policy ideas of the two international organizations EU and OECD; and an empirical investigation of the influence of these ideas on German and Norwegian family policy reforms. The thesis, whose disciplinary home is the comparative welfare state literature, thus contributes to the literature on the role of ideas, social policy in international organizations and national family policy reforms. Each part does this by informing theoretical, methodological and/or empirical parts of this body of literature: How, why, when and with what impact do family policy ideas cross borders?

First, the thesis argues that ideational frameworks provide valuable insights into policy-making on welfare. It contributes by documenting how policy failure and international comparisons and rankings are conducive to the impact of policy ideas. Moreover, a particular set of ideas, referred to as malleable ideas or family policy as a productive factor, meaning ideas that are capable of solving many problems at the same time, is shown to be particularly influential. Another finding with theoretical implications is that while ideational literature has identified conditions favourable for ideas to gain ground (i.e. become imported), the reasons why actors try to *export* ideas have hardly been investigated. Wishes to "shine" in international comparisons combined with a hope of gaining general influence are two such reasons the thesis identifies through the analysis of German and Norwegian family policy reforms.

Second, the thesis presents family policy ideas of the EU and OECD. It shows that these add up to a rather comprehensive set of policy recommendations with the potential of influencing national reforms. The recommendations are employment-imprinted, but more than neo-liberal advice as they for instance ask for strong public funding for childcare. Another finding that is just as important in the discussion of international family policy, and this applies especially to the OECD, regards the way policy advice is developed. The thesis documents how such advice to a large extent may be up loading of national policy to the international arena and that countries to a large extent decides themselves whether they are evaluated or not. This ensures countries substantial possibilities of strategic use of international actors to avoid unpleasant critique or lend authority and legitimacy to reforms.

Third, the thesis analyzes German and Norwegian family policy reforms and concludes that the advice from EU and OECD is well known among policy actors, but has not been crucial for the changes that took place. However, it finds that international comparisons have been important in Germany and that foreign policy ideas have influenced both Norway and Germany, implying that ideational factors have played a role. The policy ideas dominating national debate and reform preparations are similar to the ideas promoted by the EU and OECD, but bilateral learning is still more important than international organizations in this field of social policy.

Overall, this dissertation shows how paying attention to family policy ideas of international actors improves our understanding of welfare developments in Norway and Germany. The findings are substantiated by comprehensive data in the form of policy documents, parliamentary debates and expert interviews.

Sammendrag

Ideer som teoretisk innfallsvinkel anvendes i økende grad i studier av velferdspolitiske reformer. En årsak er at teorier som vektlegger funksjonelle (eksempelvis indre og ytre reformpress), institusjonelle (eksempelvis stiavhengighet) og politiske (eksempelvis partier) forklaringsvariabler ikke gir tilstrekkelig svar på når, hvorfor og hvordan velferdsordninger endres. Familiepolitiske ordninger har tidligere blitt analysert med utgangspunkt i et slikt ideperspektiv, men forskere har ikke sett på rollen internasjonale organisasjoner kan spille i det såkalte *ide spillet*; spredning av familiepolitiske anbefalinger. I denne avhandlingen studeres dette gjennom tre hoveddeler; a) en teoretisk diskusjon av betydningen av ideer for politikkutvikling samt hvordan slike prosesser kan studeres, b) en empirisk presentasjon av hvilken type familiepolitikk organisasjoner som EU og OECD fremmer, og c) hvorvidt slike ideer øver innflytelse på norsk og tysk familiepolitikk. Avhandlingen utgår fra disiplinen komparative studier av sosialpolitikk og bidrar til litteraturen om betydningen av ideer, sosialpolitikk i internasjonale organisasjoner og nasjonale familiepolitiske reformer. I avhandlingen drøftes hvordan, hvorfor, når og med hvilken innflytelse familiepolitiske ideer krysser grenser, spørsmål som til nå er viet liten oppmerksomhet.

Det argumenteres først for at ideperspektivet øker vår forståelse av velferdspolitikk. Avhandlingen dokumenterer hvordan faktorer som feilslått politikk og internasjonale sammenligninger og rangeringer øker sannsynligheten for at internasjonale ideer vinner frem. Tilpasningsdyktige ideer av typen familiepolitikk som produktivfaktor, det vil si ideer som kan løse flere problemer samtidig og er åpne for ulike begrunnelser, har størst gjennomslag. Et annet funn med teoretisk betydning er at mens litteratur om ideer har fokusert på faktorer som øker ideers kraft og dermed sannsynlighet for å importeres og implementeres av stater, har litteraturen oversett hvorfor ideer eksporteres. Ønsket om å fremstå som eksempel til etterfølgelse kombinert med et håp om å vinne generell innflytelse er blant årsakene som avdekkes i avhandlingen gjennom analysen av tyske og norske reformer.

I del to presenteres familiepolitiske ideer i EU og OECD. Det vises at slike ideer utgjør en relativ omfattende samling av anbefalinger med potensial for å påvirke nasjonale reformer. Anbefalingene er i stor grad økonomisk og sysselsettingsorienterte, men likevel mer enn neoliberale råd når det eksempelvis etterspørres offentlig finansierte barnehager. Et annet funn som er vel så viktig som undersøkelsen av eventuelle effekter av disse anbefalingene er samspillet mellom det nasjonale og internasjonale i utviklingen av råd. Det dokumenteres hvordan slike råd kan være nasjonale prioriteringer løftet opp på internasjonalt nivå av medlemsstatene selv samt at hvorvidt politikken i enkeltland evalueres i stor grad bestemmes av landene selv. Det siste funnet gjelder spesielt for OECD. Begge forhold gir medlemsstatene omfattende muligheter til å bruke internasjonale aktører strategisk for å unngå ubehagelig kritikk eller gi autoritet og legitimitet til nasjonale reformer.

I tredje del analyseres tyske og norske familiepolitiske reformer. Det konkluderes med at nasjonale aktører er kjent med anbefalinger fra EU og OECD, men at disse har vært lite viktige i reformprosessene. Internasjonale ideer har likevel spilt en viss rolle i både Tyskland og Norge. Sammenligningene EU og OECD utarbeider har vært spesielt viktig i Tyskland for å overbevise om og underbygge behovet for reformer. Ideene som dominerer nasjonale debatter i begge land er også svært lik ideer og argumentasjon spredt av EU og OECD, men bilateral læring synes viktigere enn internasjonale organisasjoner i familiepolitikken.

Samlet viser avhandlingen hvordan en analyse av familiepolitiske ideer i internasjonale organisasjoner forbedrer vår forståelse av velferdspolitisk utvikling i Tyskland og Norge. Funnene underbygges av omfattende datamateriale i form av dokumenter, parlamentsdebatter og ekspertintervju.

Zusammenfassung

Unzulänglichkeiten etablierter Erklärungen sozialstaatlicher Entwicklung, darunter funktionale Ansätze (interner und externer Reformdruck), institutionelle Ansätze (Pfadabhängigkeit) und politische Ansätze (Parteien), erklären das wachsende Interesse der Sozialwissenschaften an Ideen als Faktor des Wandels. Obwohl Reformen der Familienpolitik durch Ideen schon untersucht worden sind, haben Wissenschaftler die Rolle von Ideen in der Sammlung und Verbreitung familienpolitischer Empfehlungen in internationalen Organisationen übersehen. Die Dissertation will die umfangreiche Literatur um diesen bis jetzt nicht untersuchten Zusammenhang bereichern. Die Studie ist in drei Hauptteile untergegliedert: a) Eine theoretische Diskussion von Ideen und Politikentwicklung sowie die Frage, wie diese sich empirisch untersuchen lässt, b) eine empirische Untersuchung der familienpolitischen Ideen zweier internationaler Organisationen (EU und OECD), und c) eine empirische Analyse des möglichen Einflusses dieser Ideen auf deutsche und norwegische Familienpolitik. Die Dissertation, beheimatet in der Literatur vergleichender Sozialpolitik, trägt demnach zur Forschung über die Bedeutung von Ideen, Sozialpolitik internationaler Organisationen und nationaler Reformen der Familienpolitik bei. Wie, warum, wann und mit welchem Einfluss überschreiten familienpolitische Ideen Grenzen? Diese Fragen markieren Forschungslücken.

Erstens wird in der Dissertation der Standpunkt vertreten, dass die Ideenperspektive wichtige Einblicke in sozialstaatliche Politikentwicklung bietet, indem sie aufdeckt, unter welchen Bedingungen Policy-Übertragung statt findet; Rankings, internationale Vergleiche und das Scheitern von Policy verstärken den Einfluss von Ideen. Des Weiteren hat die Kategorie *anpassungsfähige Ideen* – Ideen, die mehrere Probleme gleichzeitig beseitigen können, beispielsweise *Familienpolitik als produktiver Faktor* – einen besonders großen Einfluss. Ein weiteres Ergebnis der Analyse ist, dass Ursachen des bewussten Exportes von Ideen kaum untersucht worden sind, obwohl in der Ideenliteratur mehrere Faktoren für den Import von Ideen identifiziert wurden. Der Wunsch, sich in internationalen Vergleichen hervorzuheben, und die Hoffnung, allgemeinen Einfluss zu gewinnen, gehören zu den in dieser Dissertation durch die Analyse von deutschen und norwegischen Reformen identifizierten Ursachen solchen Exportes.

Zweitens stellt die Dissertation die familienpolitischen Ideen der EU und OECD vor. Sie zeigt, dass diese Ideen eine umfangreiche Sammlung von Vorschlägen bilden, die das Potenzial haben, nationale Reformen zu beeinflussen. Die Empfehlungen sind häufig wirtschafts- und beschäftigungsorientiert, gehen aber dennoch über neo-liberale Empfehlungen hinaus: Indem sie beispielsweise die öffentliche Finanzierung von Kindergärten fordern. Ebenso wichtig wie die Analyse internationaler Einflüsse auf nationale Politikentwicklung ist die Untersuchung der auf der internationalen Ebene statt findenden Entwicklung von Empfehlungen. In der Dissertation wird veranschaulicht, wie Nationalstaaten ihre eigene Politik zu international empfohlener Politik machen können, und dass diese Staaten in hohem Maße selbst entscheiden können, inwiefern ihre Politik von den internationalen Organisationen überhaupt evaluiert wird. Dieser letzen Fund trifft besonders auf die OECD zu. Beides erlaubt den Staaten, internationale Akteure strategisch zu benutzen, um ungewünschte Kritik zu vermeiden oder Unterstützung für eigene Reformen zu gewinnen.

Drittens zeigt eine Analyse deutscher und norwegischer familienpolitischer Reformen, dass die Empfehlungen der EU und OECD den nationalen Akteuren bekannt, aber nicht besonders wichtig für politische Veränderungen gewesen sind. Trotzdem kann die Bilanz keineswegs nur negativ ausfallen: Bemerkenswert ist vor allem die nicht geringe Bedeutung von internationalen Vergleichen. Darüber hinaus sind die in der nationalen Debatte dominierenden Ideen den von der EU und OECD verbreiteten Ideen ähnlich, aber in diesem

Bereich der Sozialpolitik ist bilaterales Lernen immer noch wichtiger als internationale Organisationen.

Insgesamt wird in der Dissertation demonstriert, dass die Berücksichtigung familienpolitischer Empfehlungen internationaler Organisationen unser Verständnis von norwegischer und deutscher Sozialpolitik verbessert. Die Betrachtung der Reformen aus dieser Perspektive rückt Akteure und deren Ideen in den Mittelpunkt. Diesen Schlussfolgerungen liegt die Analyse umfassender Daten wie Dokumente, Parlamentsdebatten und Interviews zu Grunde.

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List of abbreviations (English term in brackets if original in German or Norwegian)

BFD: Barne- og familiedepartementet (now BLD; Barne- og likestillingsdepartementet; The Ministry of Children and Equality)

BLD: Barne- og likestillingsdepartementet (the Ministry of Children and Equality)

BMFSFJ: Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth)

BT: Bergens Tidende (the Bergens Tidende newspaper)

CDU: Christlich Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union)

COFACE: Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union

CSU: Christlich Soziale Union (Christian Social Union)

DG: Directorate General

DGB: Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (German Federation of Trade Unions)

DG EMPL: the Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

DELSA: Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs (of the OECD)

DNA: Det norske Arbeiderparti (Norwegian Labour Party)

EC: European Community

ECO: Economics Department (of the OECD)

ECEC: Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy

EDRC: Economic Development and Review Committee (of the OECD)

EEA: European Economic Area

EES: European Employment Strategy

EFTA: European Free Trade Association

ELSAC: Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee (of the OECD)

EMCO: Employment Committee (of the EU)

EMPL: Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (of the EU)

EMU: Economic and Monetary Union

EP: European Parliament

EPC: Economic Policy Committee (of the EU)

EU: European Union

FAZ: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

FDP: Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democratic Party)

FRP: Fremskrittspartiet (Progress Party)

GDR: German Democratic Republic

ILO: International Labour Office

Innst.S.: Innstilling til Stortinget (proposition to the Storting)

IO: International organization

KD: Kunnskapsdepartementet (Ministry of Education and Research)

Kifög: Kinderförderungsgesetz

KRF: Kristelig folkeparti (Christian People's Party)

MISSOC: Mutual Information System on Social Protection (of the EU)

MP: Member of Parliament

NAP: National Action Plans

NAP/empl: National Action Plan employment

NAP/incl: National Action Plan social inclusion

NAV: Arbeids- og velferdsetaten (the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organization)

NCM: Nordic Council of Ministers

NGO: Non-Governmental Organizations

NHD: Nærings- og handelsdepartementet (Ministry of Trade and Industry)

NOK: Norwegian krone (currency of Norway)

NSR: National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OEEC: Organisation for European Economic Cooperation

OMC: Open Method of Coordination

Ot.prp.: Odelstingsproposisjon (proposition to the Odelsting)

PIRLS: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment (of the OECD)

PROGRESS: Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity

SP: Senterpartiet (Centre Party)

SPD: Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party)

SPC: Social Protection Committee (of the EU)

SSB: Statistisk Sentralbyrå (Statistics Norway)

St.tid.: Stortingstidende (minutes of plenary proceedings)

SV: Sosialistisk venstreparti (Socialist Left Party)

TAG: Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz (Daycare Expansion Act)

TIMSS: Trends in Mathematics and Science Study

UD: Utenriksdepartementet (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

UN: United Nations

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

V: Venstre (The Liberal Party)

Glossary

This is an alphabetical list of terms with explanations used in the dissertation. These central terms are explained in English, but most often the corresponding German and Norwegian term is given since these occur in the data material and sometimes in the thesis. When no source is given the definitions and explanations are my own. All webpages referred to were accessed 28.10.2008.

Gathering terms like this and finding equivalents in all the three languages is not an easy task. Many of the translations must be considered approximate and would have needed much more than a few lines of explanation to be really thorough. For instance, the Norwegian and German translations of *gender equality* and *gender equity* or *parental* and *paternity leave* are problematic. For such terms the dictionary falls short when it only provides the reader with a Norwegian and German word and not a more comprehensive explanation about national characteristics. However, the list is meant to help the reader and serve as such even in this short form.

Activation = Aktivierung = Aktivering
The term characterises "a type of programme which aims at transferring welfare recipients to the labour market ("welfare-to-work strategies")" (Barbier 2005: 419).

(Local) Alliance for the Family = Allianz für die Familie = Allianse for familien
Since 2003, this initiative of the German government in cooperation with the social partners promotes family-friendly work environments, for instance concerning working time.

Application = Antrag = Forslag (Dok 8-forslag)
An application is a proposal from one or more MPs, for instance to change or amend a bill.

Benefit in cash = Geldleistung = Kontantytelse
Family cash benefits for instance include child benefit, maternity and parental leave.

Benefit in kind = Sachleistung = Tjeneste
Family services for instance include childcare.

Bill (draft law, legislative proposal) = Gesetzentwurf = Odelstingsproposisjon (lovforslag)

Best practice (English term used both in German and Norwegian, although it is sometimes referred to as *beste praksis* in Norway)
Best practice refers to a policy or institutional arrangement that is thought to offer good solutions to a challenge. By presenting this to others it could result in learning and transfer.

Betreuungsgeld = Cash-for-care benefit = Kontantstøtte
A German programme planned introduced in 2013. Its details are unclear, but it will probably have similarities with what is referred to as *kontantstøtte* in Norway and *Hemvårdsstöd* in Finland.

Business case for family-friendly work practices
"There is potentially a "business case" for employers to introduce family friendly policy measures. This is because such measures can contribute to the quality of the enterprise

workforce by retaining some workers who would otherwise quit (and increase the likelihood that mothers return to the same firm upon expiry of maternity leave), and by attracting those workers who value family-friendly workplace support. Both these factors contribute to a reduction in recruitment and training costs" (OECD 2007c: 185).

Cash-for-care benefit (home-care leaves, home care allowance, cash benefit for families with small children) = Betreuungsgeld = Kontantstøtte
"Leaves to care for children until they are about three years old. These leaves can be a variation of parental leaves, and payments are not restricted to parents with a prior work attachment. In Norway and Finland relevant income support payments are contingent on not using public day-care facilities. In general, payments are intended to supplement family income while one parent is at home or to purchase private care" (OECD 2007c: 105).

Child (family) allowance (child benefit more common in Northern Europe) = Kindergeld = Barnetrygd:
A transfer payment from governments to parents to cover expenses of having children. The benefit may be taxable or non-taxable and is often universal. Sometimes there are means-tested components, e.g. in Germany where parents can receive child benefits for children in higher education until they are 25 years old instead of the normal 18 year old limit.

Childcare = Kinderbetreuung = Barnehage
Childcare is "services that provide daytime care of pre-school children, often while their parents are working" (Alcock et al. 2002: 30). When the term childcare is used one often means what is also referred to as daycare centres/institutions/ facilities. This is the way I use childcare in this disseration. See also **daycare** below.

Childminder (day mother/father) = appr. Tagesmutter/-vater (Kindertagespflege/Tagespflege) = Dagmamma
A childminder provides care for children, usually at home, while the child's parents are at work as an alternative to care in an institution and is sometimes referred to as family daycare. In Germany, *Tagespflegepersonen* are increasingly professionalized (demands of pedagogical qualifications, skills in first aid etc).

Child poverty = Kinderarmut = Barnefattigdom
"The child poverty rate is defined as the share of children with equivalised incomes less than 50% of the median for the entire population" (*Babies and Bosses* 2007).

Child-rearing benefit = (Bundes)Erziehungsgeld = (appr.) Foreldrepenger:
Erziehungsgeld, replaced by Elterngeld 1.1.2007, was paid for the two first years after giving birth in Germany. In some states, a *Landeserziehungsgeld* was paid in the third year.

Commodification = Kommodifizierung = Kommodifisering
According to Esping-Andersen (1990: 35), after labour power became a commodity, "our well-being came to depend on our relation to the cash-nexus". Commodification "describes the process whereby formerly independent producers have been transformed into wage-earners who must sell their labour power on the market in order to survive and to satisfy their needs" (Morel 2006: 176).

Community method/hard law:
"The Community Method is thought of as "hard law" because it creates uniform rules that Member States must adopt, provides sanctions if they fail to do so, and allows challenges for non-compliance to be brought in court" (Trubek and Trubek 2005a: 83). Examples of hard law are directives and regulations.

Daycare/daycare facilities/daycare institution (Nursery) = Kindergarten = Barnehage
In Norway, the term *barnehage* covers all age groups until they reach school age. In Germany, different terms are used. *Kinderkrippe* usually applies to children aged 0-3 years while *Kindergarten* is for three to six year olds. The latter is often referred to as a *nursery* in English and the former as a *day nursery for the under threes*. For simplicity, I refer to public services for all age groups as *childcare* or *childcare facilities* and then specify if it only applies to a specific subgroup.

Day Care Law/Daycare Expansion Act = Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz (TAG; Gesetz zum qualitätsorientierten und bedarfsgerechten Ausbau der Tagesbetreuung für Kinder) = Lov om barnehageutbygging
The German Daycare expansion Act was passed in 2004 during the red-green coalition government. It came into force in January 2005 and aims at providing 230 000 extra places, mainly in former West Germany, which is estimated to correspond approximately to a countrywide coverage of 20 percent.

De-commodification = Dekommodifizierung = Dekommidifisering
"the degree to which social rights permit people to make their living standards independent of pure market forces" (Esping-Andersen 1990: 3).

De-familisation = Entfamilisierung = Defamilisering
Defamilisation is "policies that lessens individuals' reliance on the family" (Esping-Andersen 1999: 45) and concerns "the degree to which households´ welfare and caring responsibilities are relaxed -either via welfare state provision, or via market provision" (Esping-Andersen 1999: 51). While de-commodification can be described as the lack of individual dependence on the market, de-familization can be described as the lack of individual dependence on the family (Jensen 2008a: 157).

De-institutionalisation of family life
De-institutionalisation of family life involves "high levels of divorce and growing rates of unmarried cohabitation as an alternative to marriage, entailing rising levels of extramarital births and lone parenthood" (Hantrais 2004a: 195).

(Old-age-)dependency ratio = Altenquotienten = Forsørgingsbrøk
I rely on the following definition: "the population aged 65 years and older divided by the working age population" (Eurostat 2008b: 2). However, since this term is used so differently in different publications, I include other terms and definitions for illustration:
Demographic dependency ratio: The ratio of the population aged 0-14 and over 65 to the population aged between 15 and 64 years (EU Commission 2005b).
The age dependency ratio "is defined as the number of persons of an age at which people are economically inactive for every 100 persons of working age, usually taken to be the population aged either 15-64 or 20-59" (Hantrais 2004a: 18)
Dependency ratio is "the rate of people aged 65+ over those aged between 20 and 64" (Pestieau 2006: 160).

Early Childhood Education and Care Policy (ECEC) = Betreuung, Bildung, Erziehung = Barnehage
"includes all arrangements providing care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content" (OECD 2001b: 14).

Ehegattensplitting = Tax splitting (spouse splitting) = (ektefelle-)sambeskattning
"Spouses can choose between separate taxation of their income and collective assessment. Under the joint assessment principle normally applied, the income of both spouses is added together. To determine the joint tax burden, the income is halved and the tax resulting from the halved income is doubled. In this way, the basic personal allowance incorporated into the income tax rate is, in practical terms, doubled for spouses and the progression of the income tax rate slowed. This provides relief for single-income marriages, in particular" (EU Commission 2002: 21).

European Alliance for Families = die Europäische Allianz für Familien = Europeisk allianse for familier
„The Alliance hopes to create impulses for more family-friendly policies through exchanges of ideas and experience in the various Member States and to foster cooperation and fruitful learning from each other in the European Union" (EU webpage of the European Alliance for Families).

European legal instruments = Europäische Rechtsakte = Europeiske rettslige instrument
The EU has many legal instruments at its disposal:

> **Communication = Mitteilungen = Meddelelse**
> Communications are documents with no legal significance, sent by the Commission to the other European institutions which set out new programmes and policies (EU summaries of legislation).
>
> **Conclusions = Schlussfolgerungen = Konkluksjoner**
> "Resolutions and conclusions only express the views and intentions of the Council and/or the European Parliament. They are close to the recommendations and opinions (…). In principle, neither recommendations and opinions nor resolutions and conclusions have legal consequences" (EU summaries of legislation).
>
> **Decision = Entscheidung = Beslutning**
> Decisions "are binding and any measures required to implement them at Union level are adopted by the Council, acting by a qualified majority" (EU Glossary).
>
> **Declaration = Erklärung = Uttalelse**
> "The Declaration is the general expression of a political line, but is not legally binding. It is used frequently in connection with the common foreign and security policy (CFSP). Declarations are issued by the Presidency of the Council on behalf of the European Union and, where necessary, on behalf of the Presidency" (EU Glossary).
>
> **Directive = Richtlinie = Direktiv**
> Directives are one of the four types of decisions reached by the Council. They are "legislative instruments that specify the aims to be achieved, but which generally leave the question of how to achieve those ends up to national governments or their agents"

(Cini 2007: 458). Directives which concern areas of the EEA agreement are incorporated into Norwegian legislation.

Opinion = Stellungnahme = Uttalelse
An "opinion contains the point of view of an institution. In principle, neither recommendations and opinions nor resolutions and conclusions have legal consequences" (EU Glossary).

Recommendation = Empfehlung = Anbefaling
The term *recommendation* is only directly found in the field of employment (and the Stability and Growth Pact) where the Council has issued recommendations based on the proposals of the Commission since 1999. The Commission may propose that the Council adopts country-specific recommendations (by a qualified majority). These are not binding.

Regulation = Verordnung = Forordning
"Regulations are directly effective, spelling out not just the aims of legislation, but what must be done and how" (Cini 2007: 464).

Resolution = Entschließungen = Resolusjon
"Resolutions and conclusions only express the views and intentions of the Council and/or the European Parliament. They are close to the recommendations and opinions (…). In principle, neither recommendations and opinions nor resolutions and conclusions have legal consequences" (EU summaries of legislation).

Europeanization = Europäiserung = Europeisering
"Processes of a) construction, b) diffusion, and c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ´ways of doing things`, and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies" (Radaelli 2003: 30).

Europeanisation of social protection:
"Europeanisation of social protection concerns the relationship between the national and EU levels in social protection" (Kvist and Saari 2007: 229). It is meant to describe how national and EU levels become more interwoven (Kvist and Saari 2007: 1).

Familialism = Familismus = Familisme
Welfare obligations are assigned the family (Esping-Andersen 1999: 45).

Family-friendly policies = Familienfreundliche Politik = Familievennlig politikk
"those policies that facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life by fostering adequacy of family resources and child development, that facilitate parental choice about work and care, and promote gender equality in employment opportunities" (OECD 2002a: 10).

Family policy = Familienpolitik = Familiepolitikk
Family policy is defined narrowly as those public policies that consist of benefits and services aimed at parents with children (Lindén 2007a: 8).

Family policy idea game
Based on Marcussen (2002, 2004), I define the "family policy idea game" as how IOs such as the OECD and EU participate in the collection, formulation and transfer of family policy ideas across borders.

Father´s quota (paternal quota) = Partnermonate/Vatermonate = fedrekvote, also known as "pappaperm" or "pappapermisjon", although these last two terms usually refers to paid leave for the father in addition to the weeks of the father´s quota
Part of the parental leave reserved the father on a "use-it-or-lose-it" basis. The father's quota is often mixed with **paternity leave**, but I separate between the two terms. This arrangement is meant to ensure that both parents take leave and is called father´s leave because in practice it is often fathers who do not take leave if some weeks are not contingent on sharing the leave.

Gender equality = Gleichberechtigung = Likestilling
Gender equality "refers to the world of work and constitutes a right that in principle should be enforceable by law: equal treatment in recruitment and access to work; equal remuneration for equal work; equal advancement in work careers based on merit (vs. the "glass ceiling")" (*Starting Strong* II 2006: 30).

Gender equity = Gleichstellung = Kjønnsrettferdighet (rettferdig arbeidsdeling mellom kjønnene)
"Gender equity (…) refers to an equal sharing of child rearing and domestic work" (*Starting Strong* II 2006: 30).

Globalization = Globalisierung = Globalisering
"Globalization is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology. This process has effects on the environment, on culture, on political systems, on economic development and prosperity, and on human physical well-being in societies around the world" (the Levin Institute). Often the term is used in the sense of economic globalization, that is the integration of national economies and the possible pressure resulting from this.

Green paper = Grünbuch = **Grønnbok/offentlig utredning/høringsnotat**
"Green Papers are documents published by the European Commission to stimulate discussion on given topics at European level. They invite the relevant parties (bodies or individuals) to participate in a consultation process and debate on the basis of the proposals they put forward. Green Papers may give rise to legislative developments that are then outlined in **White Papers**" (EU Glossary). Green papers are discussion papers comparable to NOU (Norges offentlige utredninger) in Norway.

Innstilling til Stortinget = Recommendation to the Storting
The relevant committee of the Storting is often asked to consider a new bill and submit a recommendation to the Storting called *instilling til Stortinget*.

Instrumental approach to family policy = Instrumentelle Annäherung an Familienpolitik = Instrumentell tilnærming til familiepolitik
An instrumental approach to family policy means that goals like female employment, fertility or children´ s early learning rather than the well-being of families are the goals and reasons behind public policy. The emphasis on family policy is then for instrumental reasons. Such

instrumental use of family policy to promote economic growth and employment rests on a clear subordination of social to economic policy.

Interpellation (parliamentary question) = (appr.) Anfrage = (appr.) Spørsmål i parlament, interpellasjon
Question from MP(s) to the government presented in the parliament.

Joint Report = Gemeinsamer Bericht über Sozialschutz und soziale Eingliederung
"The Joint Reports assess progress made in the implementation of the OMC, set key priorities and identify good practice and innovative approaches of common interest to the Member States on the basis of the National action plans submitted by the Member States. It is adopted by the Council on a Commission proposal. The Joint Reports also set key priorities and identify good practice and innovative approaches of common interest to the Member States" European Commission Glossary).

Kinderförderungsgesetz (KiföG) = Bill on the promotion of children = Lov som fremmer barns stilling
The bill on the promotion of children was passed in November 2008 during the black-red coalition government. KiföG is a bill on a further expansion of childcare for children less than three years old and aims at providing 500 000 extra places by 2013, mainly in the former West Germany, which is estimated to correspond to approximately 35 percent coverage all in all. The bill also introduces a legal right to childcare and a cash-for-care benefit.

Kontantstøtte = Cash-for-care benefit = Betreuungsgeld
The Norwegian *kontantstøtte* is similar to the Finnish *Hemvårdsstöd*; cash-for-care.

Lebensstandardsicherung = Securing the achieved living standard/status maintenance = Statusbevarende/levestandardsikring:
The principle of living-standard maintenance guarantees the former living standard for recipients of welfare by linking benefits to previous labour market status and thus reproducing status differentials.

Maternity leave = Mutterschaftsurlaub = Svangerskaps- og fødselsermisjon
"Employment-protected leave of absence for employed women at around the time of childbirth, or adoption in some countries" (OECD 2007c: 105).

Minutes of plenary proceedings (stenographic record) = Plenarprotokoll = Stortingstidende
Sittings of the Bundestag and Storting are reported verbatim and made available in the form of minutes of plenary proceedings.

National Action Plans / National Reform Programm = Nationaler Aktionsplan/ Nationales Reformprogramm = Nasjonal handlingsplan/Nasjonal handlingsprogram
"Every Member State draws up a National Reform Programme (until 2005, National Action Plans) which describes how the Employment Guidelines are put into practice at the national level. They present the progress achieved in the Member State over the last 12 months and the measures planned for the coming 12 months: they are both reporting and planning documents" (EU Commission website on the EES).

Negative integration = Negative Integration = Negativ integrasjon
Negative integration is "a form of European integration which involves the removal of barriers between the member states" (Cini 2007: 462).

Neo-liberalism = Neoliberalismus = Nyliberalisme
"The neo-liberal criticism of the welfare state concentrates on prohibitive costs and the harmful effects of welfare provisions on dependent individuals; according to this view these provisions produce another perverse effect: they encourage a culture of dependency instead of independency. The remedy is a return to individual responsibility and less regulation, allowing the play of the market to regulate economic and social life. In addition, citizens should be encouraged to bear responsibility for their own lives" (Bussemaker 1998: 86).

Open Method of Coordination = Offene Methode der Kordinierung (OMK) = Den åpne koordinerings-/samarbeidsmetode
"The process whereby common goals are laid down and progress is measured against jointly agreed indicators, while best practise is identified and compared" (Pestieau 2006: 162).

Paternity leave = Vaterschaftsurlaub (there is no real German equivalent, the term Vaterschaftsurlaub is also used when referring to the father´s quota) = Farspermisjon/ omsorgspermisjon for far i forbindelse med fødsel
"Employment-protected leave of absence for employed fathers at the time of childbirth" (OECD 2007c: 105). The paternity leave is often mixed with father's quota, but I separate between the two terms (see **father's quota**).

Parental leave = Elternzeit (Elternurlaub) = Foreldrepermisjon
"(…) leave from employment that can be granted to fathers and mothers to allow them to take care of a young child over a rather long period" (OECD 1995: 171).

Parental benefit (on the birth of a child) = Elterngeld = Foreldrepenger
Earnings-related or flat-rate benefit paid during parental leave.

Peer review (English term used both in German and Norwegian):
"The Peer Review is a mutual learning process involving the scrutiny of specific policies on the basis of proposals volunteered by Member States. A "host country" presents a policy or institutional arrangement (good practice) or a policy reform to a selected group of decision-makers and experts from other countries ("peer countries") and to stakeholders' representatives and European Commission officials. Peer Reviews are a key instrument of the OMC" (EU Commission glossary). Different kinds of peer reviews exist.

PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) = PISA = PISA
Every three years, the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assesses the skills of 15-year-olds in more than 40 countries.

PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) = IGLU (Internationale Grundschul-Lese-Untersuchung) = PIRLS
Every five years, the PIRLS assesses the reading literacy skills of pupils in the fourth grade of schooling in more than 40 countries.

Policy transfer = Policy Transfer = Overføring av politikk
Dolowitz defines policy transfer as "the occurrence of, and processes involved in, the development of programmes, policies, institutions, etc. within one political and/or social system which are based upon the ideas, institutions, programmes and policies emanating from other political and/or social systems" (2000a: 3).

Positive integration = Positive Integration = Positiv integrasjon
Positive integration is "a form of integration which involves the construction of policies and/or institutions" (Cini 2007: 463).

Pronatalism (or natalism) = Pronatalismus (Natalismus) = Pronatalisme
Policies which promote and encourage childbearing.

Reconciliation of work and family life = Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf = Forene arbeids- og familieliv/kombinere arbeid og familieforpliktelser
Reconciliation policies are usually understood as policies for childcare, parental and childcare leave; "All those measures that extend both family resources (income, services and time for parenting) and parental labour market attachment" (OECD 2002a: 10). As Lewis et al. argue, terms like reconciliation or balance of work-family or work life are used meaning much of the same, but still having specific nuances (2008: 279). I rely mainly on the term reconciliation of work and family life.

Soft law = (English term used both in German and Norwegian, although it is sometimes referred to as *målstyring* in Norway)
"documents that are not formally or legally binding but which may still produce political effects" (Cini 2007: 465). "´Soft´ politics, which is primarily done by the Commission (and, to a lesser extent, the European Parliament) mainly consists of non-binding inciting and agitation on matters of common concern that treaties do not clearly cover" (Ross 2001: 178).

Social exclusion = Soziale Ausgrenzung = Sosial ekskludering
Socil exclusion characterises the processes that keep certain people out of mainstream society. (...) Sometimes social exclusion substitutes for the concept of poverty" (Abrahamson 2006: 1250).

(Principle of) subsidiarity = das Subsidiaritätsprinzip = Nærhetsprinsippet
"The idea that support should be provided at the most appropriate level, which is the agency closest to the person in need in the first instance. (…) Within the European Union subsidiarity has also become an important reference point, underpinning decisions in favour of retaining competencies at national (or sub-national) rather than EU level" (Alcock et al. 2002: 250).

Stortingsforhandlinger = Proceedings of the Storting (parliamentary records)
Stortingsforhandlinger "is a comprehensive parliamentary series in 9 volumes containing bills, white papers and documents from most areas within governmental enterprise. It also contains the minutes of the debates in the Storting" (Legal Information in Norway).

Stortingsmelding = White paper = Weißbuch
Report to the Storting, similar to White paper.

Stortingstidende = Minutes of plenary proceedings (stenographic record) = Plenarprotokoll
Sittings of the Bundestag and Storting are reported verbatim and made available in the form of minutes of plenary proceedings.

Stortingsproposisjon = Proposition to the Storting
Stortingsproposisjon (St.prp.) are used when the government asks the Storting to make a decision which does not involve new laws.

Sustainable family policy = Nachhaltige Familienpolitik = Bærekraftig familiepolitikk
„Sustainable family policy (Nachhaltige Familienpolitik), …, conceives of children as society's future assets; it seeks to encourage childbearing by supporting parents to balance work and family responsibilities, and attempts to reduce child poverty by increasing maternal employment" (Leitner, Ostner and Schmitt 2008: 175, Abstract). A sustainable family policy has two key aims: to provide a sufficient level of births and increase female employment participation (Rürup and Gruescu 2003: 9).

Social policy as a productive factor = Sozialpolitik als produktiver Faktor = Sosialpolitikk som produktiv faktor:
"Economic growth and social cohesion are mutually reinforcing" (Kvist and Saari 2007: 252).

Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz (TAG; Gesetz zum qualitätsorientierten und bedarfsgerechten Ausbau der Tagesbetreuung für Kinder) = Lov om barnehageutbygging = See Day Care Law/Daycare Expansion Act

TIMSS (Trends in Mathematics and Science Study) = TIMSS = TIMSS
TIMSS is an international test of schoolchildren's´ mathematics skills by the International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

White paper = Weißbuch = hvitbok/stortingsmelding:
"Commission White Papers are documents containing proposals for Community action in a specific area. In some cases they follow a Green Paper published to launch a consultation process at European level. When a White Paper is favourably received by the Council, it can lead to an action programme for the Union in the area concerned" (EU Glossary). White papers are orientation documents comparable with a Stortingsmelding (report to the Storting) in Norway.

Some glossaries available on the internet:

Bundestag: Terminology database: http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/info/database.html

EU Commission glossary: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/glossary_en.htm

EU delegation : http://www.europakommisjonen.no/info/ordliste.htm

EU Glossary : http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/index_en.htm

EU summaries of legislation: http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/da/lvb/l114535.htm

Europaveien: EU-leksikon http://www.europaveien.no/lex.asp?cat=144

Helsebiblioteket: The welfare state: a glossary for public health: http://jech.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/62/1/3

Legal Information in Norway: http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/publikasjoner/skriftserie/13/index.html

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP): http://plato.stanford.edu/

Stortinget: http://www.stortinget.no/Stottemeny/Ordbok/Norsk-Engelsk-ordliste/

Sozialterminologie: http://transvienna.univie.ac.at/uploads/media/Sozialterminologie_01.pdf

Utdanningsdirektoratet: Norsk-engelsk ordbok for utdanningssektoren: http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/upload/ordbok_no_eng.pdf

Other sources which often are helpful when translating social policy terms:

OECD *Babies and Bosses*, OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy (ECEC), Background reports from Norway and Germany for the OECD ECEC (BFD 1998, BMFSFJ 2004).

Cini (2007) and Pestieau (2006) have glossaries in their books on the European Union.

Blackwell Dictionary of Social Policy (Alcock et al. 2002) is a general dictionary.

Chapter 1 Introduction

> "Family is in. Reading the newspaper or watching television, it is almost impossible to avoid the flood of ideas which are presented, considered, rejected and presented again. Parental leave benefit. Cash-for-care. Childcare coverage. Tax splitting" (Spiegel special 2007a: 7, author's translation).

Family policy has received less attention in the literature on welfare state developments than "hard" fields like pensions or unemployment benefits. However, as the quotation at the head of this chapter suggests, this is not the case anymore. Today, family policy enjoys great and growing attention among welfare researchers and politicians. From being left to experts and political novices it has now moved centre stage and become "wahlentscheidend"; determining elections (Spiegel special 2007b: 111). If family issues used to be weak, for instance in the German political debate (Kaufmann 2002: 463), this is definitely not the case anymore. Welfare schemes for families are being expanded all over Europe. Ellingsæter and Leira (2006) refer to this increased attention towards and debate surrounding families as the politicization of childhood and parenthood. Even international organizations (IOs) like the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which used to care little about family policy, increasingly focus on this field of social policy. The OECD has just published a review on its Member States´ family policy (*Babies and Bosses,* volume 1-5, 2002-2007), and continues to focus on this field through its database on family issues, and work on the well-being of children. The EU, still without a treaty base and clear mandate for interfering in its Member States´ family policies, is currently discussing an extension of its directive on parental leave and how to make countries speed up the process of extending childcare coverage. A recent initiative called *the European Alliance for Families* might be a first step towards the exchange of best practice and experiences at the EU level within family policy. There is also a trend towards holding many EU conferences on this topic.

Both at the national and international level there is much focus on which kind of family policies states should have, and what one can learn from experiences in other countries. Reconciliation of work and family life is particularly emphasized. The OECD defines reconciliation-policies as ”measures which extend both family resources (income, services and time for parenting) and parental labour market attachment” (OECD 2004b: 10). Scandinavian countries figure highly in this debate, as possible models, due to the combination of extensive family policies, relatively high levels of fertility, female employment rates and gender equality, as well as low child poverty. To what extent do ideas on family policy travel from one country to another? What is the role of international organizations like the EU and OECD in this transmission of family policy ideas across borders?

A growing dissatisfaction with established explanatory frameworks of welfare state developments, such as functional explanations (internal and external problem pressure), institutionalist accounts (path dependency), and political factors (parties), has made scholars apply ideational perspectives to understand recent reforms. Ideas are theories, models, views or policy paradigms which influence the perception and choice of political actors. Such analysis of ideas and welfare state change may take different directions. My work relates to this growing body of literature by asking what kind of ideas are shaping current family policy reforms? More precisely, I am mainly interested in one set of actors in the development of family policy, namely international organizations. This stems from an interest in seeing if such organizations play a role even in a field where they have little formal competence. However, I do not consider organizations like the EU and OECD to be the most important actors in family policy reform processes, and have no intention of explaining recent national reforms solely with reference to IOs. This chapter presents research questions, the research design, and gives an overview of the dissertation but first I give a short introduction to the family policy field.

1.1 What is family policy and what is its purpose?

What is a family and what is family policy? Is family policy meant to serve the interests of children, parents or society or all three? In debates on social policies, politicians, bureaucrats and other stakeholders justify their views on family policy with a great spectre of arguments (Hantrais 2004a: 2). Family policy benefits may be intended to redistribute resources (reward or compensate for costs, increase equality between couples with and without children), or affect behaviour (pronatalism, timing and number of children, lifestyle) (Hantrais and Letablier 1996). Here are some of the goals attributed to this policy field (see e.g. BMFSFJ 2006a):

- ensure the well-being and interests of children and parents (e.g. to avoid poverty)
- foster child development
- ensure equality of opportunity for children (e.g. to ease integration of immigrant-children by ensuring language skills)
- prevent child mistreatment
- ensure freedom of choice for families
- be work-friendly by allowing parents to work (reconciliation of work and family life)
- improve competitiveness and growth (make high skilled workers available for trade and industry)
- increase gender equality
- increase fertility rates (pronatalism) and reduce the problems of population ageing
- promote certain types of families, e.g. the nuclear family

Of these goals, or family policy ideas, the obvious first goal of securing the well-being of children and parents is not the one referred to most often in documents explaining the need for German or Norwegian family policy reforms. It seems as if family policy in many contexts is more a means to achieve something else than an aim in itself

("hidden objectives"). There is a growing debate and criticism of what is referred to as the social investment strategy, which makes social policy instrumental in emphasizing how children are future workers, instead of being family and child-centred (e.g. Esping-Andersen 2002 and 2006a-b, for critics, see e.g. Lister 2006 or Grødem 2008). Trudi Knijn and Arnoud Smit have for instance criticized the EU for focussing strongly on labour market integration of parents whilst saying almost nothing on the labour market obstacles for family relationships caused by increased flexibility and temporariness of jobs (2007: 11). Similarly, reconciliation could mean that people get more time with their family. Some critics would, however, say that reconciliation policies are only meant to increase the employability of mothers. Equally, flexibility could mean that work is adjusted to peoples needs, or that people adjust more to work. This will be elaborated on in chapters 5 and 6 in the presentation of EU and OECD family policy ideas.

Due to this multitude of aims, there is also a multitude of indicators to measure whether family policy is successful or not. Take up rates of benefits, childcare coverage, fertility rates, female employment participation rates and poverty rates are all indicators used by countries evaluating their family policy. As a result, terms like family-friendly, work-friendly, or reconciliation of work and family life are also unclear, and their content might vary from context to context.

What family policy should include is a normative question and consequently also a contentious issue. More often than not, politicians making proposals in this area are met by allegations of prescribing how people should live their lives. And reading how the OECD deals with family policy shows that policy in this area, as in any other area, is never uncontroversial:

> "Family policies are defined as those policies that increase resources of households with dependent children; foster child development; reduce barriers to having children and combining work and family commitments; and, promote gender equity in employment opportunities" (OECD webpage on family policy, accessed 10.11.2008).

This OECD definition illustrates the considerations above. For instance, people preferring a one-earner model would probably not be completely satisfied with this definition as it is quite focussed on two incomes.

The EU and OECD do not have a distinct family policy and it is far from certain that they will develop such a policy. What they have are *ideas* about national family policy. Compared with national family policy it is still very limited. One might even argue that the term family policy should not be used. Instead one could call the policies in question *employment related policies* or perhaps *reconciliation policies*. I choose to keep the family policy concept because, first, at the national level this is where we find policies framed as reconciliation and employment related at the level of international organizations. Second, there seems to be a growing use of terms like "international family policy" when referring to the international level.[1] Third, there are even some developments that could suggest that a sort of family policy is emerging within IOs, admittedly of a special and limited kind (cf. the *European Alliance for Families* or EU Presidency conferences on family matters, discussed in chapter 5, and family policy studies and databases by the OECD, discussed in chapter 6). The term family policy captures this growing attention to, and possible emergence of, more family policy within IOs (Lindén 2007a). The concept of family policy is further discussed in chapter 2.

1.2 Research design and case selection

At the European level, the EU and OECD are two important international organizations. Compared to other international actors like the ILO (International Labour Office) or World Bank, their functions are to a certain extent limited to the exertion of moral pressure, in contrast to regulatory or financial means, to influence the behaviour of national actors. The OECD possesses no means of getting its goals and advice directly onto national agendas. Its primary tool is the best practice of naming and shaming, which leaves national parliaments and governments free to

[1] Cf. for instance the home page of the German Ministry of Family policy on "Internationale Familiepolitik" (BMFSFJ 2006b).

disregard OECD advice. Hence, the OECD makes use of a kind of soft regulation and is left with the possibility of playing what Marcussen (2002) has coined the "idea game". The EU has, since 2000, relied on a similar mechanism for international policy coordination called the Open Method of Coordination (OMC).[2]

Other organizations also focus on family issues. UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) publishes reports on family policy from time to time, and their reports on children's well-being have, for instance, received much attention in Germany (Bertram 2006) and the UK (UNICEF 2007). The ILO has several conventions on family policy.[3] The same applies to the Nordic Council and Council of Europe, which are mentioned by some of my interviewees[4] and have organized several conferences on reconciling working and family life.[5] The EU and OECD are, however, IOs with particular authority, growing importance and membership, and with increasing activity levels within social and family policy.

Many scholars argue that European social policy in general is not well developed (e.g. Leibfried 2005[6]), and that the EU has no family policy in the sense of a coherent set of objectives for government activity in this policy area, but several policies that affect the situations of families (Hantrais 2007). Family policies are cross-sectoral policies and there exists several traces of family policy in other EU social policy fields. One implication of this is that when searching for EU influence in the area, the search cannot be restricted to what is named family policies, but must include other fields of social policy. Regarding the second organization I study, the picture is somewhat different. The OECD issues direct family policy recommendations through its *Babies and Bosses* series, a study which will be presented in subsequent chapters. However, with some exceptions for the EU, both organizations can only address

[2] Pestieau offers a short definition of the OMC: "The process whereby common goals are laid down and progress is measured against jointly agreed indicators, while best practise is identified and compared" (2006: 162). In addition, the EU has potentially more power through the European Court of Justice and the fiscal discipline connected to the monetary union (EMU).
[3] See http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/, among them C156 (Workers with family responsibilities) and C183 (Maternity Protection).
[4] Informants are anonymized. I describe the interviews, data and methodology in chapter 4.
[5] See e.g. http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/youthfamily/enfance/2001portorozFC_en.asp
[6] Leibfried acknowledges that the EU plays an important indirect role in delimiting what kind of policies states can choose, but still considers the overall EU social policy initiatives weak.

family policy through soft law.[7] For the EU there exist many social policy studies, but for the OECD there are only a few. We know little about how the OECD decides which fields and topics to review and what impact it might have (Leibfried and Martens 2008).

Two national cases will be compared. Norway is internationally seen as having a family policy leading to high levels of female employment and fertility rates as well as low poverty rates (Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2007a). It is a representative of the "social democratic welfare regimes"[8] and the only one from this group which is not a member of the EU.[9] Still, relations to the common market are strong through the European Economic Area (EEA), which covers Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. This makes Norway an interesting case to investigate in its relation to the EU's social policy processes. True, the EEA-agreement does not give access to the Open Method of Coordination processes whereby this organization is now mainly developing social policy (Dølvik and Ødegård 2004: 155), but Norway is allowed to participate in some of the programmes connected to this method.[10] In OECD social policy studies, Norway is included on equal terms as any other member country. Norway is also interesting as a potential "family policy export country", something both the media and authorities at least like to claim and express through articles and press releases,[11] and which is supported by research (see Ostner and Schmitt 2008: 9 for references).

Germany has for long experienced a dramatic demographic decline and relatively low employment rates among mothers as well as more general reform pressure through financial difficulties and unification.[12] Since the early 2000s, governments have introduced substantial changes in its family policy. From being a

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[7] As chapter 5 will outline, there exists a few EU minimum directives within parental leave and protection of mothers.

[8] This is based on the typology of Esping-Andersen (1990). Arts and Gelissen (2002) provide a useful overview of this typology as well as the critique and debate it has initiated. "Social democratic" is perhaps not the best term as these particular welfare regimes have not only developed under social democratic governments. If used, it should at least be understood more broadly than as a party political label (Kuhnle 1983: 78, 163). However, a term such as "Scandinavian" would also be inadequate as this policy is not exclusive to this geographic cluster (Kuhnle 2007). See Korpi and Palme (1998) for an example of classification with other terms. Classifications of welfare regimes and how these fit family and gender policy are further discussed in chapter 2.

[9] See Njáls (2007) for a discussion of the Icelandic welfare state compared to other Nordic countries.

[10] Examples are the Lifelong Learning or PROGRESS programmes, cf. Ervik, Kildal and Nilssen (2008).

[11] See for instance "Gender equality policies as export article" ("Likestilling som eksportvare", Regjeringen 2007) or "Learning Germans Norwegian daddy leave arrangements" ("Skal lære tyskere norsk pappaperm", Aftenposten 2007, author's translations).

[12] Female employment rates were high in former East Germany (see e.g. Klammer and Letablier 2007: 674).

paradigmatic representative of a "conservative welfare regime" (Esping Andersen 1990), recent reforms have moved Germany towards a family policy usually associated with Scandinavian countries. Also, the united Germany merged two very different approaches to family policy, where the eastern part had a much more comprehensive and state organized family policy than the western Federal Republic. Another reason for the case selection is that Germany takes part in voluntary EU and OECD – led policy exchanges, thus laying itself open to influence. More generally, Germany is interesting as Europe's most populous country (disregarding Russia) and definitely one of the most influential EU-members.

Since the new German family policy has allegedly so many similarities with Scandinavian policies it practically invites an analysis of possible ideational influence and learning. Does the conceptual tool of ´ideas` contribute to our understanding of how national family policy is developed? Policy ideas are "specific policy alternatives (…) as well as the organized principles and causal beliefs in which these proposals are embedded" (Béland 2005: 2). Analytically this approach, emphasizing how policy makers import policies embraced abroad, seems interesting for several reasons. Germany is often accused of being unable to reform the welfare state ("Reformstau"; Kitscheldt and Streeck 2004, Green and Paterson 2005, Streeck and Trampusch 2005a), implying that other explanatory approaches than path dependency and institutionalism are needed to understand the recent wide ranging change that has taken place. An idea-based approach is also useful when there is only voluntary exchange of ideas and no sanctions involved, as is the case regarding advice from IOs. The EU and OECD are actors in an "idea game" (Marcussen 2002, 2004). They collect and diffuse ideas without enforcement: "The objective is not to achieve a common policy in selected issue areas, but rather to institutionalise processes for sharing policy experience and the diffusion of best practices" (Esping-Andersen et al. 2001: 256). Moreover, as my study includes the EU non-member Norway, ideas are especially interesting as they can spread across borders independently of membership of organizations. According to Bøås and McNeil (2004), we know very little about the role ideas play in international organizations and whether, how and why they spread, and with what impact. Stone (1999), Dolowitz (2000), Berman (2001), Henninger et

al. (2008) and Schiller and Kuhnle (2008) have called for research on why, when and how ideas are discussed, discredited, accepted and advocated.

Moreover, family policy is a fairly "new", less saturated field in a phase of expansion rather than retrenchment (Bleses 2003, Gatenio-Gabel and Kamerman 2006, Kamerman and Gatenio-Gabel 2007, Lundqvist 2007, Morel 2007, Fagnani and Math 2008, Pfau-Effinger 2008). It is thus less likely to be understood by exclusively focussing on economic constraints or predetermined paths. It is less institutionalized than more traditional areas such as pensions, implying for instance that there are few interest organizations and other veto players in this area. This should make it particularly interesting in a study occupied with the impact of ideas on social policies, but family policy reforms have rarely been studied from this perspective before.[13] Ideational approaches are, however, now increasingly applied in studies of family policy reforms (e.g. Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser 2004, Larsen 2005, Kübler 2007, Krüger 2007, Knijn and Ostner 2008, Pfau-Effinger 2008, Stiller forthcoming 2009). Hardly anyone pays attention to international organizations.

Family policy is, furthermore, a field characterised by much change, even path departure (Pfau-Effinger 2008), continuous development of new arrangements and has gained steadily more importance in elections and everyday politics (Dienel 2002). Every citizen is or has been part of a family and most people intend to establish one of their own. Consequently, most people have an opinion when family issues are on the agenda, making family issues both popular and controversial. Also, the traditional family as a unit is changing (lone parents, women's employment, dual income families) and family policies are cross-sectoral and thereby say much about the welfare state as a whole (Daly and Lewis 2000, Clasen 2005, Klammer and Letablier 2007, Morel 2007). Actually, the family is pivotal for social welfare but until recently it has not been considered economically important (O'Connor 2004: 193).And, as Jensen (2008a-b) argues, benefits in kind, e.g. childcare services, have so far not received much attention in welfare state research.

As Armingeon argues, "international ´best practices` and the role of international organizations as policy brokers" has been an under-researched topic

[13] Bussemaker (1998) is one example of an analysis with a similar perspective.

within the literature on social policy (2007: 907). There have been some studies in the last years of the effect of recommendations of international organizations on domestic social policy, e.g. the World Bank (Orenstein 2006), OECD (Armingeon and Beyeler 2004) or EU (Falkner, Treib, Hartlapp and Leiber 2005). The impact on family policy has barely been addressed by this literature, with some exceptions (e.g. Hantrais 2003a).[14] Since IOs have been less willing or interested in issuing advice in this field it has been too early to analyze their possible influence.

It might seem strange to ask whether family policy advice from IOs can have an influence when these IOs do not have a strong Treaty base or competence in this area of social policy. I find this issue interesting due to a number of reasons. First, the very same IOs have limited competence within areas like pensions, health care, social inclusion, and employment as well, and here it has still become common to discuss possible supranational influence. Family policy ideas, just like other social policy ideas disseminated by IOs, may have an influence even though there is no possibility for sanctions. Second, Deacon and his colleagues claimed some ten years ago:

> "The social policy of a country or locality is no longer wholly shaped (if it ever was) by the politics of the national government. It is increasingly shaped, (...), by the implicit and explicit social policies of numerous supranational agencies, ranging from global institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, through supranational bodies such as the OECD and the European Commission, to supranational, non-government agencies like OXFAM" (Deacon et al. 1997: 10).

Thus, whether and how German and Norwegian family support, one particular field of social policy, is influenced by the supranational level, becomes an interesting question and researchers have called for studies of this (e.g. Goul Andersen 2001 [2007]: 125, Berven 2005: 178-179). Third, Kaufmann stated that:

> "To this day competence on family matters is lacking on the European level. However spillover from the principle of gender equality and children's rights are to be expected. This

[14] While there is limited research on the possible influence on national family policy, quite a few theories and much research on general social policy could be identified (e.g. Falkner et al. 2005). Chapter 2 provides a more comprehensive review of literature on social and family policy of the EU and OECD.

> could enhance the influence of the Scandinavian type of implicit family policy on other nations and might also promote modernizing effects on family relationships" (Kaufmann 2002: 419).

As of today (2008), there is still no such Treaty base allowing the EU to develop its own family policy. However, whether some sort of family policy stance has been developed indirectly through other policy areas may be investigated and Kaufmann's statement ought to be considered for both the EU and OECD. An obvious question is, then, how these actors are welcomed. Do national actors use international reviews and advice to introduce new policies? What kind of international studies do national actors refer to? Do ideas from IOs result in new policies or are they used more as justification for decisions made on other grounds?

All in all, knowing that these two international organizations take an increasing interest in family policy related issues, it seems pertinent to study whether the OECD and EU, traditionally seen as being without competence and importance in the area, now play a role in its Member States search for optimal domestic policy. It is interesting in itself to get a picture of what these organizations do in this field. A key goal is thus to identify the family policy stance taken by these two organizations. This content, as well as the process of developing family policy ideas, may be quite as interesting as focussing on the question of influence, which in any case is a very demanding task. I am thus not only interested in the impact of supranational organizations, but rather in examining how the national and the international level work together and draw on each other. As underlined already, when I choose to study family policy ideas of IOs and their reception at the national level, it is not based on the expectation that national policy is decided by the international level. My interest and focus are how the two levels interact. This leads to the question of what should be understood by "influence". The influence concept, what it includes, how it cannot easily be measured, and how searching for it might make the researcher focus on the wrong thing, is further elaborated upon in the chapter on methodology.

1.3 Research questions, contributions and expectations

I seek to address three sets of questions:

a) Theoretically and methodologically: how and why can ideas matter for national family policy reforms?
b) Empirically: how much and what kind of family policy ideas exist in international organizations, and how are these ideas developed?
c) Empirically: to what extent can recent reforms in Norwegian and German family policy be understood as being a result of ideas promoted by international organizations?

The first set of questions will be treated in the theoretical and methodological chapters. The theory chapter seeks to give an overview of the ideational theories which can be useful in a project on family policy ideas. It argues that an ideational analysis can shed light on reform processes in Germany and Norway. This issue will be elaborated on in the two empirical chapters on family policy developments in Norway and Germany (chapter 7 and 8). As Béland argues, "ideas only become a decisive causal factor under particular institutional and political conditions" (2007: 4). Consequently, one important aim for the analysis is to gain insight into how, why and when ideas gain support. The global diffusion of ideas, or what Brooks (2007: 3) refers to as "internationally-transmitted information", is understudied and must be given greater attention (Béland 2007: 4, 22).

The question about how much, and what kind of family policy international organizations have will be treated in chapters 5 (EU) and 6 (OECD). Arguably, there exist more family policy ideas among IOs than is usually assumed and acknowledged in the literature (e.g. Kari 1998, Kaufmann 2002, Dienel 2004, Gerlach 2004, Deacon 2007, Falkner et al. 2005, Hantrais 2007), especially within the fields of parental leave and childcare. Thus, these chapters contribute by describing the content of family policy ideas at the international level, and by claiming that an empirical study thereof, and its possible influence, is needed. It is a paradox well worth exploring that countries seem to learn much from other countries in their family policy reforms when formal

exchange systems hardly exist. Additionally, the process of developing policy advice is interesting.

Deacon et al. (1997), Stone (1999) and Yeates (2001) have emphasized how a full understanding of national social policy challenges often presupposes a look at other factors than national institutions and relations. Although this is an empirical question, it seems to have become more common to look at foreign experiences before reforming a domestic arrangement. As stressed by Brooks (2007), policy makers usually draw on selected parts of the available experiences, more precisely on the parts they consider most relevant for them. What I shall explore is to what extent organizations like the EU and OECD play a role in identifying this "relevant part of available information".

The study of the relation between international organizations and national governments within family policy is new, and as such it fills a gap in the literature. International organizations may play a role, but we lack systematic comparative knowledge on what this role is. International family policies are in the making and it is of interest to see how the field is emerging. As such, I also seek to contribute to the debate on the future direction of international organizations' social policy.

This thread is picked up in two chapters on German (7) and Norwegian (8) reforms. In these chapters I ask whether reforms in Norwegian and German family policy can be better understood by investigating the ideas promoted by IOs. Although I do not intend any rigid testing of hypotheses, I develop assumptions based on my theoretical perspective, which I will examine (see below). These should be understood as "general conceptions rather than definite hypotheses" (Berven 2005: 20).[15] Even if the examination is limited to two cases I argue that the findings can have more far reaching applicability. An attempt to strengthen the investigation of whether ideas matter for social policy reforms is made by presenting in advance expectations of what will be indicative of such ideational influence (Berman 2001: 243). Still, it should be emphasized that my study mainly compares international disseminated policy ideas with actual national reform activity and is thus not able to determine the question of causality (Armingeon and Beyeler 2004).

[15] For an example of investigation on learning based on strict testing of hypotheses, see Nedergaard 2007.

First, I assume that social policy ideas supported by IOs have greater likelihood of being implemented than ideas not enjoying this support, since such organizations may both convince political actors of the need to reform and provide legitimacy for reformers (Marcussen 2002). In line with existing research (Marcussen 2002, Armingeon and Beyeler 2004, Zeitlin, Pochet and Magnusson 2005, Kvist and Saari 2007), I thus expect to find at least some concordance between international advice and national policy. I assume that the power of ideas is strengthened if they are accepted by and further disseminated by influential international organizations. Second, since the EU has no family policy in the sense of a coherent set of objectives for government activity in this policy area, but rather several policies that affect the situation of families, the influence on Germany and Norway is probably not very evident. This holds also for the OECD, even though its family policy statements are more coherent. Third, belonging to the welfare policy regime that is often seen as promoting best practice within family policy, I expect Norway to show less sign of EU and OECD influence than Germany, which is often referred to as having substantial challenges within its family policy. I thus expect Norway to be more of an exporter than an importer. However, other Scandinavian countries (Sweden) are thought to be even stronger paradigmatic representatives of the "social democratic" welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1990), and since Norway is not part of the social policy initiatives in the European Union, such as OMC-processes, this export role is, fourth, not surmised to be very comprehensive. These expectations are further specified in chapters 7 and 8.

A crucial source of policy change may be the process whereby governments learn from other governments. For my two countries it is here thus assumed that one looks abroad when reforming family policies, and to a higher degree in Germany than in Norway. Arguably, this would hardly be a new or surprising finding. Political scientists have for long referred to systems and experiences in other countries when understanding policy change (e.g. Collier and Messick 1975, Kuhnle 1981, 1983, 2007). However, this kind of external influence has probably accelerated and might have been pushed by the founding of IOs in the 20th century. My main contribution is

to see whether and how the EU and OECD play a role in transmission of family policy ideas.

1.4 Summary and outline

Through the comparative analysis of possible family policy learning processes in the EU and OECD, my study will contribute to literature on learning and ideational influence, and to the literature on social policy in international organizations. Figure 1 gives an overview of the dissertation.

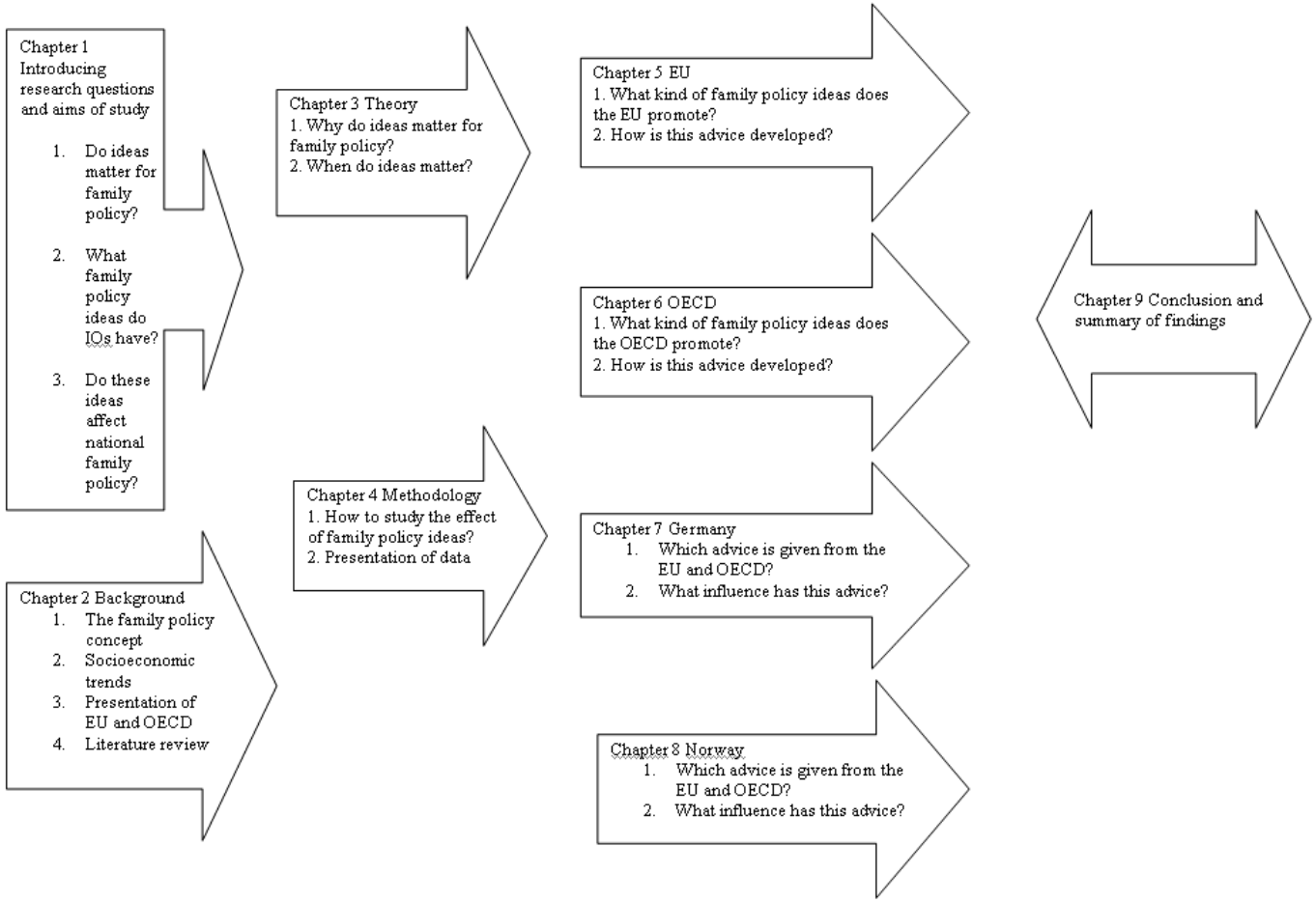
Chapter 2 provides a discussion and delimitation of the concept of family policy, presents the two IOs and reviews literature on international social and family policy. Chapter 3 discusses the relationship between ideas and policy-making. It does so by reviewing literature in the field, placing the idea perspective within the overall literature on welfare state change, as well as developing a theoretical approach on which later empirical chapters are based. I draw on literature on Europeanization, discourses and ideas, learning, policy transfer, and contributions on how states make use of foreign experiences.

Chapter 4 is on methodology. It discusses issues such as defining, isolating the effect of, measuring, and empirically applying ideas in studies of family policy reforms. In this chapter, different types of ideas will be described and data sources introduced.

The empirical analysis is carried out in chapters 5 through 8. Chapters 5 and 6 provide an overview of existing family policy advice in the EU and OECD, as well as discussing the development of these ideas. Since the OECD has an official review series on family policy around which a discussion can be structured and the EU does not, part two of chapters 5 (section 5.2) and 6 (section 6.2) are organized somewhat differently. Chapters 7 and 8 are devoted to family policy reforms in Germany and Norway respectively. My main interest is whether IOs play a role and thus I focus on the possible role of IOs in these processes than on discussing the content of the reforms. Chapter 9 summarizes the findings and concludes.

I have gathered terms and policies I refer to throughout the analysis in a glossary ("dictionary"). Each term is explained, and, as far as possible, translated into both German and Norwegian. The appendices provide additional information on data collection, data analysis and of the family policy advice spread by the EU and OECD.

Figure 1: A guide to the analytical parts of the study (see previous pages).



Chapter 2 National and international family policy

> "At first sight, then, discussing EU family and childcare policy is fruitless, since there is likely to be none. However, it turns out not to be true. Although it has had very little treaty power in the area, the EU (and the European Community (EC) before it) has made a number of forays into family policy" (Ross 2001: 177).

Family friendliness ranks high on the political agenda. The OECD defines family-friendly policies as "policies that facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life by fostering adequacy of family resources and child development, that facilitate parental choice about work and care, and promote gender equality in employment opportunities" (2002a: 10). The OECD considers such policies as benefitting both families and the society in general. A closer discussion of the concept of family policy is the first aim of this chapter. This will clarify what kind of policies the thesis is about. Second, I briefly introduce some important socioeconomic developments and give a short overview of German and Norwegian family policies that are supposed to meet such challenges. Third, I introduce the organizations whose policy ideas are the point of departure for my study, the EU and OECD, as actors in the social policy field. Fourth, a review of literature on family policy and international organizations will show which studies my own work relies on, as well as how my study can contribute to existing literature on family policy and international organizations.

2.1. Delimitation of family policy: definitions and classifications

Family policy is a term that lends itself to conceptual debate. What is a family? What is a policy? There is no definition of family at the EU level and nor do all Member States provide a definition (European Commission 2002, see Hantrais 2004a for an instructive discussion). While what constitutes a family used to be pretty unproblematic in the post war period; a nuclear family consisting of mothers, fathers and children as well as grandparents, this is much more difficult today, among other

things due to the increased number of lone parents, same sex relationships, and the trend of being "single" for long periods (Hatland 2001: 119).[16] Moreover, what is referred to as family policy in one country may be called something else in another (Strohmeier 2002: 324). In Germany, for instance, pro-natalist policies, that is policies which promote and encourage childbearing, are always difficult to address due to the experiences from the Nazi-period (Ostner and Knijn 2008). In Norway they are more or less unproblematic (but, as noted by Grødem 2008, also not important). And in the UK, there is no explicit family policy. Until recently there was no ministry for family affairs, something the new Department for Children, Schools and Families, established in 2007 (Lister 2008: 383), partly changes, but inhabitants have still enjoyed benefits labelled as family policy in other countries for quite some time.

How the family should be defined is not of central importance to this study. However, how family policy is defined is important. This guides the analysis in several respects, for instance where I look for family policies, which again decide whether I claim that the EU and OECD have family policies or not, and whether these international organizations (IOs) may have an impact on national reforms. As Wilensky argues,

> "Although the entire range of government action in some way or another impinges upon the family, programs comprising "family policy" function specifically and directly to replace or supplement household income (such as family allowances, pensions, and social assistance), offer services to families (such as family- planning services, family counselling, and child care), or serve in lieu of the family (such as home help for the aged and supplementary meals programs)" (2002: 275).

In other words, it is possible to delimit a family policy field. Figure 2.1 provides some examples of wide and narrow definitions.[17] Skevik states that family policy is a contested term without any agreed upon definition (2006: 454). Hantrais and Letablier

[16] See Stephanie Coontz (1992) for a discussion of whether families earlier really were so stable and different.

[17] According to Bay (1988: 91) public transfers to families with small children can be made in three ways;

1. benefits in cash; e.g. child benefit, cash-for-care, parental leave
2. deduction schemes in the taxation system
3. benefits in kind; e.g. publically operated and/or subsidised kindergarten places

Figure 2.1: Some definitions of family policy:

Hantrais and Letablier define family policies widely as social policies where "the family (…) is the deliberate target of specific actions, and the measures initiated should be designed so as to have an impact on family resources, and, ultimately, on family structure" (1996: 139).

Mary Daly and Sara Clavero (2002: 18) also have a rather wide definition:

> "cash payments and tax allowances for the family as a unit;
> - benefits for parents, spouses and children in different kinds of families;
> childcare programmes;
> - provision for the care needs of elderly and ill adults;
> - services for the support of families"

Strohmeier (2002: 325) provides us with yet another wide definition:
"policies intended and implemented to affect family life in one way or the other way, and we may also consider such policies that, by impact, do affect the life situation of families".

According to Kaufmann this kind of definition is too broad and he suggests calling policies having more indirect affects *family related policies* (2002: 431). Kaufmann finds the whole concept of family policy unclear and distinguishes instead between:

> a) political motives for policies affecting the family
> b) official legitimizations for policies affecting the family
> c) measures or instruments of public intervention affecting the family;
> d) the impact of such interventions

Gauthier adopts a rather narrow definition of family policy, restricting family policy to "measures directly targeted at families with dependent children, either as part of social security benefits or other social policy sectors" (1996: 3). Gauthier includes:

> "direct and indirect cash transfers for families with children (e.g. family allowances, means-tested family benefits, tax relief for dependent children); benefits related to work and granted to workers with family responsibilities (e.g. maternity and paternity leave, child care leave); services to families (e.g. day-care centres, after-school care); other services and benefits for families with children in the field of housing, education and health; and legislation directly affecting families (e.g. abortion, divorce, child alimony)" (1996: 3).

(1996) offer a much-used definition. They define family policies as social policies where "the family (…) is the deliberate target of specific actions, and the measures initiated should be designed so as to have an impact on family resources, and, ultimately, on family structure" (1996: 139). This is a rather wide definition.

I restrict family policy further, and in the present study, family policy is defined narrowly: *those public policies that consist of benefits and services aimed at parents with children* (Lindén 2007a: 8). This is what most definitions cover, and it includes benefits and services regulated by law (e.g. paid parental leave) and not enacted into law (e.g. provision of childcare facilities). It does not include general benefits aimed at the entire populace like unemployment compensation, although these fields often have special rules for recipients with children. Furthermore, the EU regulates to what extent people can bring with them national benefits when moving within the EU, but I will not look at such issues. Neither will I look at education, housing, elderly care or tax issues, even though I recognize that such measures are of great importance to the everyday life of families and the way of organising family life, for instance whether both parents have incentives to work. I focus on reconciliation issues when I say family policy, meaning; "measures that extend both family resources (income, services and time for parenting) and parental labour market attachment" (OECD 2002a: 10). How the state regulates what a family is, which kind of families we accept, obligations of children and parents towards the rest of the family and how long this responsibility lasts, are all issues outside my focus of attention. More specifically, I chose to restrict my analysis to what I argue are two major fields within the field of family policy: parental leave schemes and childcare, hereunder also cash-for-care benefits. These fields influence everyday life of European families, they are large and important enough for IOs to take an interest in, a number of reforms have taken place in the last decades and they still figure high on the political agenda.

Following the OECD, and for the purpose of my analysis; "parental leave refers to leave from employment that can be granted to fathers and mothers to allow them to take care of a young child over a rather long period" (1995: 171). Parental leave together with childcare and (in some countries) cash-for-care benefits are seen as reconciliation measures. When the term *childcare* is used one often means daycare centres. This definition underlines this: Childcare is "services that provide daytime care of pre-school children, often while their parents are working" (Alcock et al. 2002: 30). It includes what is called *barnehage* in Norway (children aged 0-6), *Kinderkrippe* (children aged 0-3) and *Kindergarten* (children aged 3-6) in Germany, and for instance

nurseries in other countries. This is the way I use childcare in this dissertation. Cash-for-care benefits, known in Norway as *kontantstøtte* and *Betreuungsgeld* in Germany, is defined by the OECD as "Leaves to care for children until they are about three years old. These leaves can be a variation of parental leaves, and payments are not restricted to parents with a prior work attachment. In Norway and Finland relevant income support payments are contingent on not using public childcare facilities. In general, payments are intended to supplement family income while one parent is at home or to purchase private care" (OECD 2007c: 105). Table 2.1 summarizes some central Norwegian and German family policies that will be discussed further in chapters 7 and 8.[18]

Paternity leave and father's quota are sometimes mixed and used interchangeably. I separate between the two, as does for instance Ellingsæter and Leira (2006) or Ostner and Schmitt (2008). The father's quota is the part of the parental leave reserved the father on a "use-it-or-lose-it" basis. Paternity leave, however, refers to "Employment-protected leave of absence for employed fathers at the time of childbirth" (OECD 2007c: 105). This may be outside the general parental leave arrangement, as it for instance is in Norway.

In the literature on family policy the comparison of welfare states and classifications of different profiles of state support for families figure prominently. Esping-Andersen's *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990) is by far the best-known and used typology of welfare states. Esping-Andersen identified what he labelled the "liberal", "conservative" and "social democratic" welfare regimes. His classification has sparked a debate that is still going on. Scholars have criticized several aspects of his analysis such as having too few categories (missing the Mediterranean welfare states in Spain and Portugal) and neglecting the gender-issue.[19] The last point is of some importance for my study. I will not elaborate much on this critique (see Arts and Gelissen 2002, Künzler 2002, O'Connor 2004 or Guo and Gilbert 2007 for excellent overviews), but what was questioned was the neglect of

[18] For a recent discussion on the family policy packages (cash benefits, tax breaks, exemptions from charges, subsidies, services in kind) in Germany, Norway and other European countries, see Fagnani and Math (2008).
[19] Later Esping-Andersen (1999) recognized that family issues should be given more emphasis and introduced the concept of familisation and de-familialisation (cf. glossary) to describe the role of families in welfare provision. Moreover, his later work has shown a very strong interest in family policy matters (2002, 2006a-b).

Table 2.1: German and Norwegian family policy in 2008

Family policy/country	Germany	Norway
Welfare regime	"Conservative"	"Social-democratic"
Paid parental leave	60 weeks (14 + 8 + 38) at 67 % wage replacement*	44 weeks (9 + 6 + 29) at full wage replacement or 54 (9 + 6 + 39) weeks at 80 % wage replacement**
Of this reserved for mothers (maternity leave)	14 weeks (6 weeks before, 8 weeks after birth)	9 weeks (3 weeks before, 6 weeks after birth)
Of this reserved for fathers (Father's quota)	8 weeks	6 weeks
Part of the parental leave mothers and fathers may decide how to share	38 weeks	29 weeks or 39 weeks
Paternity leave (in addition to the parental leave)	No statutory paternity leave	2 weeks (paid or unpaid decided by employers)
Cash-for-care benefit	*Betreuungsgeld* is planned introduced in 2013 and the amount € 150 a month has been suggested	*Kontantstøtte* (€ 400 a month) for children 1-3 years old
Legal right to childcare services	Legal entitlement for a part time kindergarten place for children aged 3 – 6 since 1996, for 1-3 year olds planned introduced in 2013	A statutory right will apply for children aged 1-6 from August 2009
Childcare coverage 1.12.2007 **a) children 1-2 years** **b) children 3-6 years**	 a) 13,3 % (West: 7,2 %, East: 43%) a) 87,1 %	 a) 69,2 % b) 94,3 %
Child benefit; age limit and monthly amount	Universal until the child is 18, means tested until 25 years old/ € 154 month (increasing with number of children)*** (partly taxable)	Universal until the child is 18 years old/€ 122 month (non-taxable)

Sources for childcare coverage: Asplan 2008, Bundesregierung (2008), Destatis (2008). *The duration of the German parental leave is not stated in a fixed number of weeks but rather 12 + 2 months. The special system of calculating the period of leave means that the total leave is sometimes not exactly 60 weeks as I have written in the table. **From July 2009 the Norwegian father's quota will be 10 weeks. Two of these are taken from the mother´s leave; two more are added, making the total parental leave period 46 or 56 weeks. ***From January 2009, the German child benefit will increase by € 10 for the two first children and slightly more for the next.

gender sensitivity and the role of families in the provision of care and welfare (e.g. Orloff 1993, Sainsbury 1996, O'Connor 2004, see also chapter 7). In the words of Jane Lewis, Esping-Andersen "misses one of the central issues in the structuring of welfare

regimes: the problem of valuing the unpaid work that is done primarily by women in providing welfare, mainly within the family, and in securing those providers social entitlements" (1992: 160).[20] This and similar critique has resulted in new classifications of welfare states. Figure 2.2 provides an overview of some of these classifications. As is clear from the figure, the number of "regimes", in which countries are grouped together, as well as their labels (and, of course, characteristics if I had included these), vary substantially.[21] France is for instance placed within many different welfare regimes. Duvander, Ferrarini and Thalberg (2008) argue that a recent trend in Europe in order to meet challenges of low fertility and ageing societies is that states add new policies to older ones instead of replacing them, thus generating models with seemingly contradictive elements (2008: 22). Hacker refers to such strategies as layering (2004: 248). One could thus hypothesise that there is still work to be done on classification of models. I return briefly to this issue, as well as the question of welfare regimes and convergence, when discussing the introduction of the cash-for-care-benefit in Germany (chapter 7) and Norway (chapter 8) and in chapter 9 (conclusions).

If family policy is an ambiguous term in itself and if classifications are so different and controversial, family policy in connection with international organizations is even more unclear. Scholars writing on international family policy, e.g. Linda Hantrais, stress how the EU has no real family policy but rather *policies on reconciliation of work and family life*[22] and *other social policies with an impact on families* (Hantrais 2004a: 133, 166, 167, Hantrais 2007: 115-116). And Mary Daly argues that in Europe of today, family policy is more or less combined with employment policy into one policy field while it used to be a distinct domain of social policy (2004: 147).

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[20] The importance of unpaid work is still often not recognized. Cf. for instance Borchorst and Goul Andersen (2006) who accuse the members of the recent Danish welfare commission of neglecting gender in their analysis of challenges of the welfare state.

[21] For an overview of multinational comparative research on family policies in Europe, cf. Kaufmann (2002: 443). Since then, quite a few studies have followed, e.g. Hantrais (2004), Abrahampson et al. (2005), Bradshaw and Hatland (2006), and Ostner and Schmitt (2008). Another source is the project "Improving Policy Responses and Outcomes to Socio-Economic Challenges: changing family structures, policy and practice" (IPROSEC), funded by the European Commission and led by Linda Hantrais (cf. http://www.xnat.org.uk/).

[22] Often only the short form reconciliation is used. And lately, the term conciliation (Norwegian: forsoning, megling) is sometimes used rather than reconciliation and could be replacing it (see e.g. Leira and Saraceno 2008: 8). This must not be confused with family conciliation understood as conflict resolution in connection with separation or divorce etc. Reconciliation is also sometimes substituted by balance, e.g. ´work-life balance` or ´work and family balance`. The terms may have different meanings and implications, e.g. for gender equality (cf. Lewis and Campbell 2008). I mainly use reconciliation of work and family life since the EU, OECD, Norway and Germany seem to rely mostly on this term.

Figure 2.2: Overview of typologies for different profiles of state support for families

Esping-Andersen (1990):

1. Social-democratic; Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland
2. Liberal; UK, Ireland, US, Canada, New Zealand
3. Conservative; Germany, Austria, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy

NB: Esping-Andersen (1999) identifies a fourth regime – Southern Europe.

Kamerman and Kahn (1978):

1. Explicit and comprehensive family policy; France, Norway, Sweden
2. Explicit, but narrow family policy; Austria, Denmark, Germany, Finland
3. Implicit and reluctant family policy; Canada, UK, US

Lewis (1992), Lewis and Ostner (1995, 1994):

1. Strong male breadwinner countries: Britain, Germany and the Netherlands
2. Moderate male breadwinner countries: France and Belgium
3. Weak male breadwinner countries: Sweden, Denmark

Siaroff (1994):

1. Protestant social democratic welfare states; Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway
2. Protestant liberal welfare states; Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK, US
3. The advanced Christian Democratic welfare states; Austria, Belgium, France, West Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands
4. Late female mobilization welfare states; Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland

Gauthier (1996):

1. The pro-family/pro-natalist model; e.g. France
2. The pro-family, but non-interventionist model; e.g. US, Ireland
3. The pro-egalitarian model; e.g. Denmark, Sweden
4. The pro-traditional model; e.g. Germany

Hantrais (2004):

1. Defamilialised; Denmark, Finland, Sweden, France, Luxembourg, Belgium
2. Partially defamilialised; Ireland, UK, Austria, Germany, Netherlands
3. Familialised; Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Cyprus, Malta
4. Refamilialised; Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland

NB: Hantrais identifies four clusters with subgroups. For simplicity, I have not listed the subgroups here. However, this illustrates the tradeoffs between parsimonious and "exact" classification.

Abrahamson, Boje and Greve (2005):

1. The Parental Welfare Model: France
2. The Male Breadwinner Model: Germany
3. The Residual Poverty Oriented Welfare Model: The UK
4. The Municipal Social Service State: Denmark and Sweden

Pfau-Effinger (2006):

1. Dual breadwinner/external care model: Denmark, Finland, Sweden, France, East Germany, Poland
2. Male breadwinner/female part-time care provider model: West Germany, the UK
3. Dual breadwinner/dual care provider model: the Netherlands, Norway

There are numerous other typologies, e.g. Kaufmann (1982), Kuijsten et al. (1994), Schunter-Kleemann (1994), Hantrais and Letablier 1996, Korpi (2000), Pfenning and Bahle (2000) and Leitner (2003) to mention just a few.

The idea of "reconciliation of work and family life" is the dominating idea at both national and EU level. According to Hantrais;

> "Due to a lack of consensus among member states over social policy until the late 1990s, most of the proposals for measures with a potential impact on family life were enacted under the auspices of the treaty provisions for equality, or for health and safety at work, including the directives on equal pay (75/117/EEC), equal treatment in social security (79/7/EEC), maternity (86/613/EEC) and parental leave (96/34/EC), and the recommendation on childcare (92/241/EEC)" (2003c: 250).

Other concepts and aspects of family policy could have been discussed here. However, these are introduced in the relevant chapters, and instead of elaborating on concepts and other issues, I give a short overview of socioeconomic developments relevant for my study.[23]

2.2 Family change and public policy

Table 2.2 provides an overview of some important social trends relevant for family policy. Without going into detail, the EU and OECD family policy advice and reforms I discuss later are partly answers to these developments. Based on such indicators, both organizations make comparisons and rankings of their members, an issue discussed further in chapters 5-8.

Many of these challenges speak for themselves and do not need comprehensive explanation. Women postponing having children often have fewer children than women who are younger at the birth of their first child. The lower fertility rates in combination with steadily increasing life expectancy and population ageing change the old age dependency ratio. This is the ratio between people in working age to economically inactive people. According to a recent press release from Eurostat (2008b), this ratio will go from 1-4 in 2008 to 1-2 in 2060. This worries policy makers all over Europe, as there will be less people to finance an increased number of people relying on welfare schemes (e.g. pensions and health). Konrad Adenauer, chancellor in

[23] In the glossary I provide definitions of all major terms and concepts used.

Table 2.2 Overview of some socioeconomic trends relevant for family policy in Europe

Trends	Germany	Norway
Female employment rates (OECD statistical profiles)	1975: 47,3 % 1995: 55,3 % 2006: 61,5 %	1975: 50,2 % 1995: 68,8 % 2006: 72,3 %
Fertility rate (Eurostat 2008a)	2006: 1,3	2006: 1,9
Old age dependency ratio in 2008 – 2030 (Eurostat 2008b)	2008: 30, 3% 2030: 59,1 %	2008: 22,1 % 2030: 43,9 %
Child poverty (around 2000) (Babies and Bosses 2007)	12,8 %	3,6 %
Marriages (per 1000 persons) (Eurostat 2008a)	1995: 5,22 2007: 4,48	1995: 5,29 2007: 4,98
Mean age of women at first birth (Babies and Bosses 2007)	1970: 24 2004: 29	1970: … (unavailable) 2004: 27,6
Mean age of women at first marriage (Babies and Bosses 2007)	1980: 22,9 2004: 28,4	1980: 23,5 2004: 29,1

Sources in brackets.
Female employment rates: "Share of women of working age (15 to 64 years) in employment" (OECD country statistical profiles 2008).
Old age dependency ratio: "the population aged 65 years and older divided by the working age population" (Eurostat 2008b).
Child poverty: "The child poverty rate is defined as the share of children with equivalised incomes less than 50% of the median for the entire population" (Babies and Bosses 2007).

post war Germany, is reported to have said that people will always have children, thus making it unnecessary for the authorities to intervene in family issues (Abrahamson 2007: 198). Having had a fertility rate around 1, 3 for a long time, well below the average of 2,1 children per women needed to avoid population decrease, proves Adenauer wrong. As such, the sustainability of the welfare state is under pressure. Moreover, growing female labour market participation means that women are no longer available as unpaid care workers, and that new welfare demands develops, e.g. the demand for childcare institutions.[24] Lone parenthood, increased unmarried

[24] According to Hantrais (2004: 196), higher female employment participation rates could be seen as both part of a challenge and part of the solution. They contribute to the sustainability of the welfare state by making often highly educated persons available for the labour market and increase tax revenues. At the same time they create new demands for care. Interestingly, it is seldom discussed how men could increase their share of domestic work to compensate for women's increased labour market participation. According to Larsen; "equal opportunities policies have received much less attention than the work-family life reforms. It is mainly policies driven by economic concerns, which primarily enable women rather than men to reconcile work and family life that

cohabitation and high divorce rates, what Hantrais refers to as de-institutionalisation of family life (2004a: 195), also create changed expectations towards the public provision of welfare. Child poverty, often in connection with lone parenthood, is a major challenge for many European countries today and yet another problem family policy may be expected to respond to. Changes in attitudes towards gender roles or child-raising also affect what kind of policies families ask for, and often imply a wish for more services such as childcare or care for other dependent family members: "Those who in the past perceived women's desire for childcare outside the home as a dangerous expression of self-interest now view it as a valid economic choice. (…) childcare has moved from being a private responsibility to a more public economic issue" (Bussemaker 1998: 90).

Whether or not public policies at all are able to influence such developments is a discussion in itself (Hantrais 2004a: 198). Does family policy affect fertility, family structure and individual behaviour or is "the family a policy-resistant and autonomous, self-determining social system" (Strohmeier 2002: 324)? For instance, the incentives provided by governments in the form of benefits in cash and kind may influence if and how many children people get, but public attitudes and the general economic situation are only two of many other aspects that also are important for such decisions. This topic is somewhat outside the scope of my analysis and will hardly be discussed in my thesis. Both the policy advice of the EU and OECD as well as the German and Norwegian reforms take the efficiency of public policy more or less for granted and implement such policies out of an expectation to be able to influence behaviour. I briefly return to this issue in chapter 9.

My study will investigate what role family policy ideas play for national reforms. Socio-economic trends such as delayed marriage and family formation, decreasing fertility rates and population ageing, new attitudes towards work and family and changes in parental employment rates of course also matter. The empirical chapters 5 through 8 will discuss some of these trends. However, I refer the reader to Bradshaw and Hatland (2006) or Ostner and Schmitt (2008) for excellent,

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predominate the political agenda" (2005: 76). Men's rights and obligations are hardly discussed (2005: 77). For further interesting contributions on this matter, see e.g. Nancy Fraser (1994) and Ann Orlof (1993).

comprehensive and up to date sources on such data. I now continue this chapter by giving a presentation of the EU and OECD, as well as an overview of literature on their social and family political ideas.

2.3. Presentation of the EU and OECD

2.3.1 EU social policy[25]

The European Coal and Steel Community, founded in 1951 by six countries, became the European Economic Community (EEC) after signing the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Growing and developing continuously, the European Union consists of 27 Member States in 2008. Securing peace, economic integration and trade have been the main goals since the beginning and social policy has received less attention (Kleinman 2002). However, as the number of Member States has grown and the common market has become ever more comprehensive, the topic of social policy has gained importance. The EU has some social policy in the form of binding directives, above all on workers' rights, but in accordance with the subsidiarity principle the national level is left with most of the responsibility for social issues. When describing EU's social policy role it is common to distinguish between positive and negative integration. Positive integration is about constructing common EU social policies (market-correcting policies, common social standards), while negative integration is about promoting free trade and competition which may limit Member States´ social policies (market-making policies) (Scharpf 1999). Research indicates that the former is less developed than the latter (Leibfried 2005, Kvist and Saari 2007, Scharpf 2002, Streeck 1995).

The EU has used the Community Method to develop and implement integration since 1957. This method relies on transfer of competence to the EU level, demands of compliance associated with the threat of sanctions and enforcement, and legal standardisation across Member States. Results from the Community Method include directives and regulations. However, the last decade or so, the EU has increased its use

[25] Cini (2007), Hantrais (2007), and Wallace, Wallace and Pollack (2005) provide excellent introductions to the EU and its role within social policy.

of soft governance through the Open Method of Coordination. This method does not involve transfer of competence, sanctions or similar laws. Instead, the OMC is similar to the peer review method applied by the OECD (Schäfer 2006), where setting of goals, spreading of best practice and monitoring are stressed. The OMC varies within the fields it is applied and is best developed within employment and social inclusion and less within pensions and health. Common for all OMCs are "its legal non-bindingness (…) and its dependence on the will of national governments to comply with OMC standards" (Kröger 2007: 566). Some authors still argue that the EU is different from the OECD in this respect through its political rather than scientific character, which means that political interests become important in addition to persuasion and arguments (Armingeon 2007, Noaksson and Jacobsson 2003). Other scholars consider these organizations to share the same characteristics and kind of recommendations (Kildal forthcoming 2009, Casey 2004, Dostal 2004). Some studies of the OMC on employment and social inclusion conclude that learning processes have yet to result in much change (e.g. Scharpf 2002, Chalmers and Lodge 2003) while others draw a more positive picture (cf. the summary in Zeitlin 2005a: 450-452, 457-458).[26]

The EU consists of different institutions with different mandates.[27] The European Council and the Council of the European Union represent national governments while the European Commission and the European Parliament are supposed to represent the EU as a whole. The European Court of Justice is an independent institution. As explained by Stratigaki (2000), the different institutions may have different opinions on what is the appropriate level of EU social policy.

The EU can forward social policy in two ways: "through a process of ´levelling up` existing national social policies or through a specifically European (supranational) social policy" (Kleinman 2002: 22). The first possibility invites a study of the impact of the EU although there is no such thing as an EU social policy and even less an EU family policy. The second one is, however, also relevant for my study since, as I will argue throughout the analysis, some steps towards a more comprehensive EU approach

[26] For an overview of studies of the influence of the OMC in Germany, especially the EES, see for instance Büchs (2006, 2007), Büchs and Friedrich (2005), Büchs and Hinrich (2007) or Heidenreich and Bischoff (2008).
[27] On different stakeholders within EU family policy development, see Dienel (2004).

to family policy can be identified. What is the status of family policy within the EU so far according to the literature?

2.3.2 A European family policy?

Whether EU-membership strengthens or weakens national welfare policy is a disputed topic, particularly in countries debating whether to join the Union or not, such as Norway. Scholars discussing these questions mainly conclude that the EU is currently not having direct social policy competences to substantially imprint national policy, but that it indirectly through the advancement of the common market may change national policies, and that developments and impacts in the long run are more difficult to assess (Kuhnle 2000, 2001, Kleinman 2002, Scharpf 2002, Korpi 2003, Leibfried 2005, Hagen 2006, Hantrais 2007). The EU influences what kind of policies states can have (negative integration), but EU social policy initiatives (positive integration) are still weak (Kleinman 2002, Scharpf 2002, Falkner et al. 2005, Leibfried 2005, Bailey 2008).[28] This applies particularly to competence in family policy (Hantrais 2007), even though researchers acknowledge that EU regulations are increasingly attentive to families through policies on reconciliation of work and family life (e.g. Weiss 2000, Stratigaki 2000, 2004, Ross 2001, Dienel 2002, 2004, Duncan 2002, Kaufmann 2002, Hantrais 2003a, 2004a, 2007, Gerlach 2004, Kildal and Kuhnle 2006, Lewis 2006b, Mahon 2002, Abrahamson 2007). The EU has no family policy in the sense of a coherent set of objectives for government activity in this policy area, but several policies that affect the situation of families. Family policies are cross-sectoral policies and there exists several traces of family policy in other EU social policy fields.

[28] Some authors credit the EU with somewhat more importance, e.g. Threlfall (2007) and Kvist and Saari (2007), acknowledging both increased competence and focus on social policy, but still in a delimited and incremental way. According to Kvist and Saari (2007: 19), social protection is Europeanized, meaning that national and EU levels become increasingly interwoven: "…, we also find significant developments at the EU level, including developments driven by politics (that is, not by courts or markets) that amount to more than ´fragmented EU social policy`. The point here is that positive integration in social protection is no longer geared towards a transfer of sovereignty from the national to the EU level, but rather to facilitate collaboration among sovereign Member States" (2007: 233). Cf. Büchs for a different view on the OMC and negative/positive integration (2006: 50).

Hantrais stresses how family policy is mainly a national policy field and there is not an OMC for family policy (2004a: 206). However, Hantrais speaks of *the family impact of other social policies*. This could be exemplified by the need for childcare facilities and parental leave identified as part of the European Employment Strategy (EES) of getting more mothers into paid work (2004: 167). Still, "The interest shown in family matters at EU level has generally been confined to issues concerned with working conditions and arrangements that impinge on family life, rather than family policies *per se*" (2004a: 211). Authors like Mahon (2002) or Stratigaki (2004) share this analysis of how family policy related issues at EU level are by and large interpreted in an economic perspective.

Recent studies of the effect of EU recommendations on domestic social policy, e.g. Zeitlin et al. (2005), have not paid attention to the possible impact on family policy, with some exceptions (e.g. Hantrais 2003a, 2004a). Falkner et al. (2005) focus on directives, i.e. partly forced influence, while Kvist and Saari (2007) only look briefly at family and demographic issues. Plantenga et al. (2008) provides a short discussion of the effect of the EU childcare provision goals. Mahon (2002), Stratigaki (2004), Hantrais (2007) and Knijn and Ostner (2008) do not investigate whether EU policies influence national family policy, but state that such impact is possible, providing a good rationale to follow my research question of whether domestic reforms are inspired by actions and advice from IOs.[29]

I will subject this claim about EU family policy neglect to scrutiny and offer an analysis that runs counter to arguments that the EU is uninvolved in the family field. Analyzing different fields of EU social protection policy suggest that they contain potential EU family policy and recent EU initiatives might increase its influence, a finding that extends the existing literature on EU social policy. Subsequent empirical analysis of German and Norwegian policy-making will check whether policy actors are aware of, interested in and influenced by this.

[29] Cf. Leaman (2003) for an overview of useful sources on the European family policy process and Hantrais (2003c) for an overview of research on family and welfare issues funded by the European Commission.

2.3.3 The OECD[30] - more than one single institution

In 1961, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) replaced the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), which had been set up in 1948 to administer the Marshall Plan. Since 2000, the organization has 30 members. It is a forum for policy dialogue, peer review and surveillance of country policy (Deacon 2007: 57). The OECD homepage lists 6 aims:[31]

1. Support sustainable economic growth,
2. Boost employment,
3. Raise living standards,
4. Maintain financial stability,
5. Assist other countries' economic development,
6. Contribute to growth in world trade

The focus on economy is clear from this list. My focus is on social policy, and according to Deacon (2007: 57), the OECD is, based on its policies and recommendations in the 1970s and 1980s, associated with viewing the welfare state as a burden. *The Welfare State in Crisis* (OECD 1981), based on a conference collection of different papers, is a mile-stone publication from this period which advised Member States to decrease social spending. In the two following decades, this has partly changed, as indicated by the publication *Extending Opportunities: How Active Social Policy Can Benefit Us All* (OECD 2003b).[32] Deacon, Hulse and Stubbs argued in 1997 that "Social considerations enter if they are regarded as a help or a hindrance to economic growth" (1997: 70, see also Deacon 2001). The following discussion will show that this is very much the case. As Deacon et al. (1997), McBride and Williams (2001), Mahon (2006) and Schulz-Nieswandt and Maier-Rigaud (2007) bring forth, though; there is a debate within the organization on what goals should be prioritised. The *Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs* (DELSA) and the

[30] Marcussen (2004) provides an excellent introduction to the OECD and its role within social policy. Readers interested in a more comprehensive account are referred to Marcussen (2002).
[31] www.oecd.org, retrieved 15.05.2008.
[32] One section on the OECD in Deacon, Hulse and Stubbs (1997: 70) is called "from welfare as a burden to welfare as an investment?". See also Mahon (2006: 174) or Schulz-Nieswandt and Maier-Rigaud (2007: 415).

Economics Department (ECO) appear to have different positions. Interviews bring forth that the DELSA is sometimes referred to as the left-wing of the right-wing organization (OECD interview 2, 3 and 6) and this is where the work on family policy is done. The ECO is often considered the "hardliners", being among other things responsible for the country surveys (OECD interviews 2, 3, 6, Ervik forthcoming 2009). Transferred to a national context this equals disputes between a ministry of social affairs and a ministry of finance. The Economics Department is more powerful than DELSA, something that for instance is reflected in staff and resources (Marcussen 2002: 46, 200). While ECO produces several important publications at set times, e.g. the *Economic Survey* and *Economic Outlook*, which are probably the two most important OECD reports, DELSA is mostly project oriented and has the *Employment Outlook* as its only report on a regular basis. This power-bias might be one of the reasons why one interviewee describes his work within DELSA as *employment-oriented social policy* (OECD interview 3). Still, the different directorates do of course also cooperate (OECD interview 2, 3, 5, 6).

2.3.4 The family policy of the OECD

Compared to the scholarly literature on EU social policy, there seems to be a small, but growing literature on OECD social policy. This literature contributes also to our understanding of the power of ideas because these organizations´ impacts depend on the quality of their advice (Kildal 2005: 54). This also applies to EU-literature, but having even less possibilities to make binding decisions than the EU, the OECD relies totally on persuasion and the power of arguments.

Deacon et al. (1997) and Deacon (2001, 2007) cover the OECD in their discussions of global social policy, but not in great depth and only as one of many other international actors. They hardly mention family policy. Neither do Schulz-Nieswandt and Maier-Rigaud (2007), who instead discuss the content of OECD advice on employment and pensions, describe its neo-liberal imprint and criticize the strong focus on employment as a solution to most social problems. Martens (2007) has

focussed on the education policy of the OECD. Kaasch (2006, forthcoming) discusses OECD health policy.

Schäfer compares the EU and OECD and concludes that their working procedures (OMC, peer review) constitute a similar form of multilateral surveillance (2006: 71, see Bisopoulos 2003 for a similar argument). Schäfer concludes that this approach is not very effective in reaching policy goals because it cannot "oblige reluctant governments to change their policies" (2006: 85).

Marcussen (2002) has identified different roles the OECD can play in order to influence national policy-making, including developing new ideas and spreading old (cf. section 6.1). In doing this, Marcussen sheds light on how Member States have an important say in the development of OECD advice on their own policies. This means that the question of whether Member States are influenced by the OECD becomes a less straightforward issue to investigate. I will draw on his concepts and approach in chapter 6 on the development and content of OECD family policy ideas.

Armingeon and Beyeler (2004) provide a comprehensive study of the OECD and its impact on national policies. Scholars from 14 countries analyze whether OECD recommendations are consistent over time and space (consistency), and whether the policy models and ideas it promotes result in reforms (efficacy). In the country chapters, interactions between the international and national level are discussed in the social policy fields of pensions, employment, health and education. In the concluding chapter Armingeon reports that the consistency has been high while the efficacy has been low (2004: 228). Armingeon (2007) reaches a similar conclusion in an analysis of active labour market policy.

The country chapters on Germany (Zohlnhöfer and Zutavern 2004) and Norway (Kildal and Kuhnle 2004a) are helpful to my study when developing assumptions on the possible influence of the OECD as will be shown in chapters 7 and 8. The two introductory chapters (Beyeler 2004, Marcussen 2004) as well as the concluding one (Armingeon 2004) include extensive discussion of theoretical issues and methodological implications. However, for my purpose the study has two limitations; family policy is not covered and the study relies only on document analysis of *Economic Surveys*. The former is not strange since family policy is a new field for the

OECD and the latter is probably because the study covers such a long time period (1970-2000). Still, sources such as interviews with key national and international actors and parliamentary debates can provide a fuller picture.

If there are not so many studies of the OECD and its general social policy role, there are even fewer taking issue with its family policy. There is hardly any literature on this subject.[33] Jenson (2008) and Lister (2008) criticize the EU and OECD family policy stance, particularly on childcare, because they consider it an instrumental approach focussed on employment and economy rather then promoting a good childhood. Deacon briefly states that the *Babies and Bosses* project is not neo-liberal (2007: 59), but like Jenson (2008) and Lister (2008), he does not engage in any detailed examination of content or impact. Mahon (2006) is one further exception. She focuses on the work/family reconciliation agenda of the OECD and provides the reader with an insightful comparison of the *Babies and Bosses* and the *Starting Strong* series. Mahon concludes that the *Babies and Bosses* series (2002, 2003, 2004) is characterised by an instrumental view of children and a more work-oriented approach than *Starting Strong* I (2001) where children's well-being is central. Her analysis is based on document analysis. However, important reports (volumes 4 and 5 of *Babies and Bosses* as well as *Starting Strong* II) were published after her analysis was conducted. Kildal and Kuhnle (2006) constitute yet another exception as they summarize both EU and OECD family policy initiatives and examine how the recommendations have been welcomed. Based on document analysis they conclude that neither of the two organizations has been important for family policy reforms in Norway and Denmark.

2.4. Conclusion

This background chapter has clarified and delimited the family policy field and my research interests. I have emphasized how I take a narrow approach to family policies,

[33] Three new books will help filling the gap for both OECD social and family policy: McBride and Mahon (2008), Ervik, Kildal and Nilssen (forthcoming 2009) and Martens and Jakobi (forthcoming). When writing this, only two conference papers by Mahon (2007a-b) that will be part of McBride and Mahon (2008) and Martens and Jakobi (forthcoming) are available in addition to chapters from Ervik, Kildal and Nilssen (forthcoming 2009). It is also possible to find very brief references to whether countries follow the OECD in other recent publications, e.g. Ostner and Schmitt (2008: 203) or Knijn and Ostner (2008:106).

defined here as *public policies that consist of benefits and services aimed at parents with children*. I will particularly look at parental leave, childcare and cash-for-care benefits. The first section also discussed comparisons of welfare states and referred to different authors´ classifications of national family policy models. Section two briefly discussed family and socioeconomic trends relevant for later discussions on reforms. Section three introduced the reader to the social policy roles played by the EU and OECD. The two organizations were presented briefly, followed by an overview of the few central contributions to the small, but growing literature on OECD social policy and family policy in particular, and the corresponding and somewhat larger body of literature on the EU. The short literature review showed that studies of OECD social policy initiatives remain few, that its work on family policy has barely been studied, partly because the OECD has a short history in this field, and that new data, e.g. in the form of interviews and parliamentary debates, could shed light on possible impact on national policy reforms. For the EU, scholars have focussed more on why it has so little competence in the area of family policy and less on whether it may inspire national policy makers to reform their family policies. Consequently, a new "inventory" is needed as well as an investigation of possible influence.

Knowing that these two international organizations increasingly attend to family policy related issues, it is of interest to study whether the OECD and EU, traditionally seen as being without competence and importance in the area, now play a (central) role in their Member States´ search for optimal domestic policy. And it is interesting in itself to get a picture of what these organizations do in this field. What kind of family policy ideas international organizations really disseminate is important and will be discussed in detail in chapters 5 and 6. However, first theoretical (3) and methodological (4) chapters will clarify possibilities and limits of an ideational analysis of family policy.

Chapter 3 How ideas matter for social policy

> "Steady increases in life expectancy, coupled with declining fertility rates, will bring about unprecedented demographic changes in Europe – demographic changes of a magnitude not seen since the Black Death ravaged the European continent in the Middle Ages" (Lisbon Council and IBM 2007: 5).

Let me open this chapter with some thoughts on the possible influence of ideas in recent reforms in pensions, care and family policy. Countless reports describe how the populations of European countries are in steady decline. The quote above, from a Belgian based think-tank, even draws parallels to the Black Death, one of Europe's worst catastrophes ever. Many actors consider demographic change as objective evidence of "problem pressure", implying that they must reform the welfare state. However, as shown by Maier-Rigaud (forthcoming 2009), this is not as unambiguous as is claimed, which is illustrated by the different approaches of international organizations. Analyses of the World Bank, the EU, and the OECD, show that western welfare states are facing an old age crisis, forcing them to reform. The ILO, however, argues in a different way. According to the ILO, the pressure to reform is exaggerated, and the situation is not as hopeless as one might sometimes think when listening to those wanting fundamental reforms (ILO 2006).

Traute Meyer has made a related observation. It is somewhat paradoxical that there has been an increase in care-related rights during times of austerity when people in need of care are a politically weak group (2005: 282-283). We witness a similar trend within family policy, where the state is less focused on cost containment than in other fields. How come there is expansion of care and family policies when economic reality seems to force politicians to reduce pensions and unemployment benefits?

This puts emphasis on what Mark Blyth has noted; crises are not self - apparent phenomena, but on the contrary, have to be both narrated and explained (2002: 9). This is a good point of departure for shedding light on why ideas should be given a central place in understanding social policy developments. Blyth explains how a crisis

is not sufficient to promote change, because "no exogenous factor can in and of itself explain the specific forms that institutional change takes" (2002: 8).[34] Both the kind of change, and the conditions under which institutions change, must be analyzed.

Marcussen (2002, 2004) has coined the term ´idea game` to illuminate how an international organization like the OECD can play a role in national social policy reform processes. The ´idea game` is to be understood as "a question of formulating, transferring and authorising principled or causal beliefs with a view to constraining or enabling certain types of social behaviour within the OECD area" (2004: 16). Through this game, the OECD "collects, manipulates and diffuses data, knowledge, visions and ideas to its member countries and, to a still larger extent, to a series of non-member countries" (2004: 29). Adjusting this to my field of social policy means that a ´family policy idea game` is about how IOs such as the OECD and EU participate in the collection, formulation, and transfer of family policy ideas across borders. The game is about "how actors strategically behave in order to make an idea dominant while playing with adversaries" (Noaksson and Jacobsson 2003: 34).

In this chapter my aim is to elaborate theoretically on why and how ideas can matter for family policy reforms. This discussion will be the basis for the methodological and empirical chapters to follow. First I place the idea-perspective within the overall literature on welfare state change, and explain why I have chosen to rely on ideational theory rather than other perspectives (3.1). Then I present and review the relevant body of literature on ideas (3.2.1-3.2.4), before I explain how I will use these theoretical insights in my own empirical work (3.3). I do not offer a complete theory for how ideas originate and gain influence, but rather a study of how ideas within the family policy field can matter for policy change. As a connection to chapter 4 on methodology, I also provide an example of a study that highlights methodological challenges when relying on ideas in explanations of welfare reforms (3.4).

At the outset it might be useful to stress what this chapter is not about. Applying concepts like ideas and discourses could make the reader think of discourse analysis. I am not applying a discourse analysis in the tradition of Foucault, and I am not

[34] Cf. Hay and Rosamond (2002) for similar arguments.

concerned with language analysis. I use the term *discourse* pragmatically as a pure analytical term; "as a general analytical tool rather than as a theoretical or methodological approach in itself" (Nilssen 2007: 23). Policy discourses are "coherent systems of ideas that link normative judgement about policy goals to practical accounts of the policies likely to reach them" (Taylor-Gooby and Daguerre 2002: 6). In other words, the policy discourse provides actors with a definition of both the problem and possible solutions, as well as normative content of the arguments. The concept of discourse sheds light on how actors view policy programmes, and their consideration of means and ends, by underscoring that discourse is a set of ideas and an interactive process, with the potential to overcome opposing interests and alter perceptions (Schmidt 2002: 169). Here I use the terms idea and discourse more or less interchangeably, because they both serve as sources for input in decision-making processes.[35]

3.1. The idea-perspective within overall literature on welfare state change

While the development and growth of welfare states, as well as the grouping of welfare regimes, have dominated research for quite some time (e.g. Esping-Andersen 1990), much of the current literature on welfare policies focus on reforms and issues such as retrenchment or convergence (Starke 2006). This body of scholarship has identified several explanations for reforms that can be organized in different categories. A division in functional explanations (*internal and external pressure)*, *political factors*, and *institutionalist accounts*, is not exhaustive, but sufficient here, since the main point is to place the idea-perspective, in relation to other literature on welfare state change, as an additional perspective.[36]

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[35] Beckman (2005) informs us about how an "idea-analysis" (idéanalys; idea-centred perspective) is different from a discourse analysis. The latter is concerned with structural phenomena while an idea-analysis focuses on motives of policy makers. The discourse analysis has more comprehensive aims. It assumes that the reality is socially constructed and possible to understand through discourse analysis. Still, both idea- and discourse analysis consider knowledge to play an important role in policy change.

[36] See for instance Schmidt and Radaelli and how they group factors of policy change somewhat differently when introducing their discourse perspective (2004a: 183, 186). See also Goul Andersen (2001) [2007], Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser (2004) or Starke (2006).

Among the *internal pressure factors*, unemployment, population ageing, changes in family structure, and higher women employment rates are prominent (Huber and Stephens 2001, Esping-Andersen et al. 2002, Bonoli and Shinkawa 2005). Such structural social economic forces mainly challenge existing welfare policies, because the programmes are not capable of or have not enough resources to handle the kind of needs and number of recipients present today, or for a presumed future. Somewhat similar to this kind of argument, reform pressure is also seen as coming from *welfare programmes themselves*; welfare schemes commit the state to high expenses not foreseen when the programmes were developed and, in the opinion of some authors, reduce work incentives, or create poverty traps (Tullock 1983, Mead 1992). As will be shown in later chapters, this attitude is very present within some IOs.

There can be no doubt that financial problems, uncertainty about the sustainability of welfare arrangements, and population ageing, are worrying European governments. However, the family policy reforms I will analyze in the chapters to follow represent extension rather than cutbacks of the welfare state. As such, cost containment has obviously not motivated policy makers in Norway and Germany. Still, the same actors have beyond doubt searched for policy measures that at least to some extent are able to help secure the long term sustainability of the welfare state. As such, socio-economic variables and demographic developments have importance. It is important to stress, though, that politicians must identify such challenges before they have an impact. In the words of Castles,

> "As in the case of the crisis literature on the implications of globalization, one is forced to conclude that much of the rhetoric about the budgetary consequences of population ageing is motivated more by short-term considerations of containing or cutting back public budgets than by justified anxieties concerning the consequences of demographic change" (Castles 2004: 139).

Some scholars focus more on *political factors* (“parties matter”, power resources), such as political parties or institutions, to explain welfare policy developments (Hibbs 1987, Esping-Andersen 1990, Korpi and Palme 1998). Leftist governments are considered to be less willing to enact cutbacks than centre-right governments (Castles

1982, 1998). However, this view has been challenged by authors pointing at how exactly leftist governments are able to reform without too much heavy criticism from groups opposing such change, e.g. labour unions (Ross 1997, 2000a-b, Kitschelt 2001).

Treib and Falkner (2004) and Falkner et al. (2005), for instance, find that German red-green governments have been keener on fulfilling the EU directives on parental leave, and complying with its soft-law provisions, than other governments. Armingeon and Bonoli (2003) consider reconciliation of work and family life to be a centre-left, rather than Christian Democratic, conservative, or liberal policy priority. This seems only partly to fit the family policy reforms in Germany and Norway. Norwegian extension of childcare is popular among all political parties while the cash-for-care benefit is more of a conservative-liberal priority. In Germany, the same may apply to these two family policy programmes, but a conservative led government promoted the new Elterngeld-reform, something the traditional power resource theory would not predict. Therefore, theories on political factors will not suffice to understand the reforms I study.

Institutions play a role for welfare reforms as well. They establish veto players that may or may not be conducive to change, and sometimes lead to path dependency, implying that changes in the welfare state are heavily influenced by their past (Pierson 2001, Tsebelis 2002). Veto players are defined by Tsebelis as actors "whose agreement is necessary for a change of the status quo" (2002: 19). The varieties of capitalism approach (Hall and Soskice 2001) focus on institutions, and mainly explain stability.

However, family policy is less saturated and institutionalized than policy areas such as pensions. There are few interest organizations or other veto players (e.g. trade unions) in this field of social policy. Therefore, reforms cannot be understood by exclusively focussing on institutional constraints or predetermined paths. Moreover, the reforms I discuss include reforms so comprehensive that we can speak of path departure and paradigmatic change (the German Elterngeld). Thus, theories on veto players and path dependency, will not help us understand current reforms in an adequate manner.

Globalization and European integration are sometimes referred to as *external pressure factors*, and globalization has been one key concept in the debate on welfare restructuring. Mishra (1999) claims that globalization results in a growing economic interdependence, which again leads to pressure on welfare policies, because such policies are a disadvantage when competing for international capital (see also discussions in Scharpf 2000 or Palier and Sykes 2001). This argument has been widely criticized, e.g. by Castles (2004). Hirst and Thompson (1999), Yeates (2001), and Rieger and Leibfried (2003), even present social policy more as a prerequisite for, than threatened by, globalization. European integration may have a similar effect as globalization, increasing competition and making both EU Member States and other European countries less positive towards expensive welfare arrangements, but again, scholars diverge in their interpretation (e.g. Leibfried 2005, Kvist and Saari 2007).[37] The impact of globalization and Europeanization is disputed and if it plays a role, it is because politicians choose to understand it this way.

Whether international organizations play a part in the development of national reforms is the topic of this thesis and will be discussed throughout the coming chapters. However, IOs only produce limited external political pressure in the form of recommendations and advice, not binding decisions. This makes Pfau-Effinger (2008: 202) conclude that family policy change cannot be the result of EU policies. However, she does not mention the possible influence of soft law. As such, external pressure is absent, but ideas may have influence.

Other, more country specific reasons for welfare reforms may be considered as well. For Germany, family policies of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) could be a source of influence, but Klammer and Letablier (2007: 674) state that East Germany has had little influence on the West German model. For Norway it is

[37] Both the globalization and Europeanization concepts have been used in so many different ways that they are almost analytically empty if they are not defined and presented thoroughly. Daly for instance writes that globalization "is in danger of becoming little more than a general term to refer to exogenous economic developments" (2000: 79). Here I refrain from a conceptual discussion since my aim is only to list factors prominent in the debate on welfare reforms. Globalization can briefly be defined as "a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology" (the Levin Institute). Radaelli gives the following definition of Europeanization: "Processes of a) construction, b) diffusion, and c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ´ways of doing things`, and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies" (2003: 30).

reasonable to ask whether learning from Scandinavian neighbours has taken place. This would at least partly fit with an ideational approach occupied with voluntary transfer, and will be briefly returned to in chapter 8.

A growing dissatisfaction with established explanatory frameworks of welfare state developments, such as functional explanations (internal and external problem pressure), institutionalist accounts (path dependency), and political factors (parties), has made scholars search for new perspectives to understand recent reforms.[38] A considerable body of scholarship is now introducing ideas as important factors in understanding change in welfare arrangements (e.g. Campbell 1998, 2002, Schmidt 2000, Cox 2001, Blyth 2002, Schmidt and Radaelli 2004, Béland 2005, Taylor-Gooby 2005, López-Santana 2006). The importance of ideas, however, is of course not new – it suffices to mention Beveridge, Bismarck or Keynes, names which are associated with specific policy ideas, to illustrate that ideas always have played a part in social policy development. Authors also increasingly deal with IOs, their role in the spreading of ideas, as well as the possible impact (e.g. Armingeon and Beyeler 2004, Deacon 2001, 2007, Falkner et al. 2005, Mahon and McBride 2008, Ervik, Kildal and Nilssen forthcoming 2009, Martens and Jacobi forthcoming).

Section 3.2 reviews this idea literature, which is thought to be both more open to agency and sensitive towards interaction between actors and structures than other theories (Berman 2001: 246).[39] Literature about the power of ideas is, of course, not

[38] For a closer discussion of this, see e.g. Lieberman (2002), Blomqvist (2007), Seeleib-Kaiser and Fleckenstein (2007).

[39] The choice of literature on ideas as the theoretical framework is motivated among other things by the light it can shed on how countries completely voluntarily embrace foreign social policy programmes. However, other bodies of literature such as literature on compliance, international organizations and management literature could have been used. Compliance literature often focuses on hard law like directives and is less relevant for my approach (e.g. Chayes and Chayes 1993, Downs, Rocke and Barsoom 1996, Börzel 2002, Falkner et al. 2005, 2008, Linos 2007). There is a body of literature on international organizations that could be relevant to include, (e.g. Barnett and Finnemore 2004, Diehl 2005). However, these authors mainly deal with other organizations than the EU and OECD, and also focus less on social policy, so I hardly draw on this literature (Bøås and McNeil 2004 is one exception). Within management literature there is also a focus on ideas. The importance of reputation/image is stressed and there exists, for instance, a voluminous literature on Corporate Social Responsibility. Cf. Kvåle and Wæraas (2006) and Røvik (2007) for a Norwegian perspective. While this literature also focuses on ideas and their dissemination, it is mainly from the perspective of private business organizations, comprising ideas on management, strategy, design and structure of organization, and Human Resource Management. I thus do not draw much on this literature in my work.

without weaknesses. Some of these are addressed in the following review, e.g. the relation between ideas and interests.[40]

3.2. Review of ideational based approaches

Berman (2001) refers to the recent increase in approaches relying on idea-based explanations of policy-making as an ideational renaissance in political analysis. The role of ideas has been discussed in contributions on social learning (e.g. Heclo 197, Hall 1989, 1993), agenda-setting (e.g. Kingdon 1995), policy networks (e.g. Haas 1992), diffusion (e.g. Kuhnle 1978, 1981, 1996, Weyland 2005), policy transfer (e.g. Dolowitz 2000b-c), globalization and europeanization (e.g. Featherstone and Radaelli 2003), and discourses and ideas (e.g. Campbell 1998, 2002, Schmidt and Radaelli 2004).[41]

I examine whether advice from international organizations influences family policy reforms in Norway and Germany. In other words, I study learning, lesson drawing, diffusion or policy transfer, terms which I use interchangeably. This process, characterised by Karvonen (1981) and Dolowitz (2000a-b-c) as the use of ideas from abroad in the development of domestic policy, is illuminated in the different bodies of literature listed above. I shall first provide an overview of the findings in the most important literature (3.2.1 – 3.2.4) and then draw on these when I develop my own approach (section 3.3).

Since there is not one specific theory on ideational influence in social policy (Evans and Davies 1999: 363, 364), I organize these first sections around a set of

[40] Cf. Weiss and Carayannis (2001) for a useful discussion of different possible shortcomings of this literature.
[41] Scholars organize the literature discussed here in particular ways. For instance, Stone (1999) and Nedergaard (2007) argue that policy diffusion is a collective term of policy transfer and policy learning. Weiss and Carayannis (2001) differentiate between three groups of ideational literature; institutional, expert- and activist groups, and constructivist approaches. Schmidt (2006) provides us with an instructive discussion of different forms of institutionalism where discursive institutionalism, comprising scholars like Hall or Blyth, is a particular relevant category for my project. However, to me it is not so important how the literature is grouped. It is enough to say that there exists a great body of research that is relevant for my research questions, having as a common feature a focus on the role of beliefs and ideas, making Nedergaard calling this body of research "the belief approach" (2006: 425). It is more important to identify useful theories that can shed light on my research questions and serve as point of departure for assumptions than making categories of ideational literature.

questions.[42] According to Rueschemeyer, there will never be a detailed theory on how ideas matter (2006: 249). However, drawing on the above mentioned contributions, I may present what adds up to theory on how ideas can matter for social policy development by answering the following questions: what does it mean when saying that ideas matter for social policy? Why, when and how do ideas matter for social policy? What is the relationship between ideas, interests and institutions?

3.2.1 What does it mean that ideas matter for social policy? Why and how do ideas matter for social policy?

The argument about how ideas play a role in policy-making is perhaps expressed in its most precise and shortest way like this:

> "Idea-based explanations identify ideas, or *beliefs about the world*, as having an independent influence during processes of policy change in that they affect how political actors form and reformulate their preferences. Thus, ideas help actors determine what they should do and what lies in their interest" (Blomqvist 2007: 5).

I understand *independent* as implying that ideas add something that interests or problem pressure alone cannot deliver. As will become clear from the analysis; I do not think it makes sense to say that ideas alone change policies (section 3.2.3). Therefore I do not think that there is an inherent lack of logic in ideational theory, when claiming that ideas have an independent effect on policy-making, and then identifying policy failure, problem pressure, and supportive powerful actors as beneficent for the success of the very same ideas. And, as Beckman writes, it is not the idea that has impact on something; it is peoples´ understanding of ideas that is important (2005: 81). Thus, actors and ideas can hardly be separated from each other. Ideas alter the views of actors and open new perspectives, which may result in new perceptions as well as –ultimately- policy change. Dobbin et al. (2007) explains how this can happen:

[42] This is a technique applied in some state of the art papers, see for instance Stone (1999), Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) or Berman (2001).

> "The driving idea here is that changes in ideas drive policy diffusion. Policy makers derive ideas about how to bring about political justice and economic growth from the world around them. Given changing norms and uncertainty about which policies are most effective, policy makers copy the policies that they see experts promoting and leading countries embracing or policies that they see their peers embracing" (2007: 454).

Knill and Lehmkull (1999) provide an overview of how ideas at the level of the EU can influence domestic policy-making. They examine EU legislation, and not policy ideas without sanctions which I do, but their insights are still useful, because Europeanization can also be about the spread of unbinding advice. They give three ways in which European policies may promote national reforms: by providing legitimization, by providing specific solutions, and by altering or constraining the possibilities for opposition. The last way requires some explanation. Even if former opponents are not entirely convinced by the new ideas disseminated at the international level, they might change their strategy from rejecting a reform, which they now experience is given momentum by outside influence, to actively participating in the shaping of the reform. Europeanization can thus both change actors´ beliefs and alter domestic opportunity structures.

This is the point in studies of policy transfer, diffusion, and lesson drawing. Ideas developed in one context are applied in another setting. Dolowitz defines policy transfer as

> "the occurrence of, and processes involved in, the development of programmes, policies, institutions, etc. within one political and/or social system which are based upon the ideas, institutions, programmes and policies emanating from other political and/or social systems" (2000a: 3).

Ideas may of course be transferred within a country, e.g. between two regional authorities, but the literature is mostly occupied with how ideas from abroad are used in domestic policy.

From these introductory clarifications arises the question about what an idea is. Campbell (1998) differentiates between four kinds of ideas based on their level of

generality; paradigmatic ideas, programmatic ideas, frames, and public sentiments. His argument, which I share, is that each type exerts a different kind of influence on policy-making (1998: 384). *Paradigmatic ideas* are often referred to as ideologies. Such ideas are more overall views upon the functions of, in my case, social policies. *Programmatic ideas* offer concrete solutions to problems and include causal views. A third type of idea in Campbell's typology is *frames*. Framing means making solutions acceptable. The last type is ideas as *public sentiments*. The point here is that ideas must be politically legitimate and acceptable in order to get necessary support in the electorate. Campbell's and similar categorizations by Goldstein and Keohane (1993), Yee (1996) or Tannenwald (2005), summarize and specify the idea concepts in an instructive way, which I rely on when presenting the ideas relevant for domestic family policy reforms in chapter 4. However, as mentioned in chapter 1, Béland offers a clear and short definition, sufficient to illustrate what is most often understood by policy ideas, and is most interesting for my study of the spread of family policy advice: ideas are "specific policy alternatives (…) as well as the organized principles and causal beliefs in which these proposals are embedded" (2005: 2).

Two authors who have focussed upon ideas from the perspective of discourses are Schmidt and Radaelli (2004a-b). As noted by Nilssen (2007), the use of discourse and ideas imply the same analytical perspective, but the concept of discourse can be considered broader than that of ideas. Discourse, Schmidt and Radaelli state, "helps create an opening to policy change by altering actors´ perceptions of the policy problems, policy legacies and ´fit`, influencing their preferences, and, thereby, enhancing their political institutional capacity to change" (2004a: 188). While many of the studies and authors I have referred to have idea-based perspectives, which more or less consider ideas to be independent variables causing policy change, ideas and discourses are more like intermediate variables to Schmidt and Radaelli. Ideas and discourses are both new perspectives, shaping policy-making (discourse as a set of ideas), and a resource, useful when trying to convince others of its qualities (discourse as an interactive process). This is a fairly broad understanding of discourse, and Schmidt and Radaelli acknowledge this themselves in referring to it as an umbrella definition (2004a: 197). Schmidt (2000) draws a similar distinction: discourse as both

a means and a cause. The *communicative discourse* is constructed by government-centred elites, directed toward the general public, whereas the *coordinative discourse* is constructed by wider elites and directed at the very same elite (2000: 232). Both are needed, according to Schmidt, to achieve change. In my approach I will focus more on the ideational (or coordinative discourse) and less on the interactive dimension (or communicative discourse).

Ideas and discourses contribute to policy learning (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004a), and a framework based on discourses and ideas is very similar to approaches relying on concepts like learning and lesson drawing. Learning seems to be a common feature in all approaches dealing with the effect of ideas and discourse. In an article from 1993, Hall elaborates on the success and failure of Keynesianism, introducing concepts such as *social learning*, *policy paradigm*, and *first/second/third order change*. The latter three-level change measure is used in many studies trying to capture to what extent a particular welfare reform is changing the basis of the welfare state in question (e.g. Hinrich and Kangas 2003).[43] To describe the degree of change caused by ideas is not my main aim. For my purpose, what Hall writes about social learning and policy paradigms is more interesting. Social learning is: "a deliberate attempt to adjust the goals or techniques of policy in response to past experience and new information. Learning is indicated when policy changes as the result of such a process" (1993: 278). This perspective must include learning from negative experiences, learning what *not* to do (Rose 1991), and learning without action; i.e. disregarding experiences and advice. However, as Hall notes, policymakers "work within a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing" (1993: 279). This framework is a policy paradigm, and the role of ideas in this framework is to define what information, knowledge, and goals dominate *the policy process*. Policy paradigms are sometimes replaced by new policy paradigms,

[43] A somewhat related, but different tool is found in Streeck and Thelen (2005b). They focus on how actors cultivate change and offer five modes of such change. *Displacement, layering, drift, conversion* and *exhaustion* are all processes that might result in institutional change. Some of these processes have been outlined by other authors, see e.g. Hacker (2004). They are processes of gradual change and emphasize different routes or strategies agents of change could follow. This is less useful for my purpose since I focus on the role played by international organizations. Cf. Schiller and Kuhnle (2008) for a useful discussion of policy change frameworks.

which are not in accordance with each other (1993: 280). Hall's analysis of paradigm shifts offers us three important insights: a) the move from one paradigm to another is political rather than scientific since it is impossible to decide neutrally which one is best (cf. Blyth 2002 above), b) change is strongly connected to authority, implying that such paradigm shifts are usually associated with shifts in actors´ authority, c) shifts often occur after policy experimentation, or policy failure. By focussing on learning, Hall emphasizes the importance of ideas in policy-making, since policy makers always have to consider established and new ideas in their work; ideas condition policy-making (1993: 290).[44]

3.2.2. When do ideas matter for social policy?

To identify factors that increase or decrease the likelihood for ideation, that is the causal effect of political ideas and beliefs upon policy-making, is a central topic in the literature dealing with ideas. Conditions that are important for the fate of a new idea can roughly be divided into *characteristics of the idea itself* and *characteristics about the surroundings (the context)*. Starting with the latter, many scholars emphasize circumstances and structures within the political system that affects the idea's chances of success. Authors agree that the success of new ideas relies on the existence of some kind of problem or crisis: dissatisfaction drives policy change (e.g. Rose 1991). Examples of such problems are economic recession or crisis, defeat in war, feedback about existing programmes (implementation problems, costs, unanticipated consequences, failure to meet goals), or policy failure in some way (Heclo 1974, Rose 1991, Hall 1993, Kingdon 1995, Stone 1999, Berman 2001, Bönker 2001). To authors like Blyth (2002), this dissatisfaction creates uncertainty and opens what Kingdon (1995) refers to as a *policy window*, which offers opportunities for action on given initiatives. Related to this is the power of those who carry the idea. Epistemic community is a term coined by Haas (1992), and refers to groups of experts and influential actors whose ideas meet best reception in uncertain times when the need for

[44] For a closer discussion of the differences between theories on and concepts of learning, see for instance Bennett and Howlett (1992) and Radaelli (2007).

knowledge and expertise is high. More generally and according to Rueschemeyer, "the strength of (…) ideas depends to a large extent on their grounding in groups and institutions" (2006: 249). Government turnover, changes in public opinion and national mood, new power relations, mobilization of interest groups, and the appointment of a commission of inquiry, are then, all examples of factors which are important for the degree to which an idea will gain influence (Heclo 1974, Goldstein and Keohane 1993, Levy 1994, Stone 1999, Berman 2001). The reputation thesis, focussing mainly on compliance with hard rather than soft law, says that a wish to keep a good reputation, for instance as being cooperative and progressive, can explain the import of policy ideas (Linos 2007). And as Büchs notes, institutionalism theory "suggests that voluntary policy exchange and policy transfer are more likely to take place between Member States with similar backgrounds and close relationships, because it would be too costly to adopt significantly different foreign models into a domestic framework" (2006: 46, cf. also Simmons and Elkins 2004: 175).

Regarding the idea itself, the responsiveness of ideas to particular problems (Berman 2001) is crucial. Hall emphasizes this in saying that how policy makers respond to new ideas is influenced by economic viability (the solution must fit the problem), administrative viability (the agreement of civil servants as well as the resources of the state to implement change), and political viability (the idea must be attractive to politicians as well) (1989: 375). The central point about ideas is that they identify aims and offer solutions (Hall 1989: 390). To Hall, ideas mainly play a role in the process of convincing politicians to adopt a new policy. His aim is to understand how an idea becomes adopted, but also how an idea results in new policies. As such, ideas are both to be explained and to explain an outcome. Brooks (2007), Simmons and Elkins (2004), and Bönker (2005,) argue that the availability of successful foreign models makes the spread of ideas more likely, while negative experiences decrease or defer such spread. Similarly, governments are more likely to import a policy when a consensus exists on which policy is appropriate. If not, the government will "face reputational consequences that cast doubt on their approach to the economy and, potentially, the legitimacy of their governance" (Simmons and Elkins 2004: 173). Policy failure makes actors open to change, and successful ideas from other contexts

increases the chances of import. Also, and this is argued by Schmidt and Radaelli (2004a: 201), the chances for success are higher if the ideas and discourses include normative arguments that can be combined with the more cognitive arguments about relevance and efficiency.

McNeill (2006) or Blomqvist (2007) underline another very important criterion for the success of an idea; the power of an idea increases if the idea is formulated in a way which makes it open to several interpretations. In the words of Palier, "(...), an important element for the acceptance of a new measure seems to be its capacity to aggregate different – and even contradictory – interests, based on different, and sometimes contrasting, interpretations" (2001 [2007]: 117). Schmidt's observation is that ideas may change cognitive orientations and overcome interest-based opposition, by appealing to some common values or goals (2000: 308). Intuitive, straightforward and logical ideas spread easier than more complex ideas (Marcussen 2002).

According to Brooks (2007), costs or risks associated with a new policy, e.g. financial expenses or political capital in the process of convincing others of the merit of the policy, are important as well. International organizations like the EU and OECD are known to be able to reduce these costs (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000: 7). Relying on advice from such organizations provides domestic policy makers with argumentation as well as legitimacy. Risse, Cowles and Caporaso (2001), and Börzel and Risse (2003), argue that a misfit between national and international (European) advice triggers change, the pressure to change depending on how big the mismatch ("goodness of fit") is. The scope for new policy ideas is larger when the misfit is high. One should expect that "low costs ideas" have the highest probability of acceptance.

Bennett focuses on how the interests of the importer, and not the quality of the ideas themselves, decide the use of policy evidence from abroad (1991: 31). Such motives may be to put an issue on the agenda, mollify political pressure, provide best practice, summarize options, and reinforce decisions already made. McNeill is concerned with related issues when he says that both the inherent merit of the idea (the power of the idea), and the status and resources of the promoters (the power of the promoter), influence the success of an idea (2006: 344). This is an illustration of how ideas, actors, institutions, and interests are closely related.

An insight from Weir and Skocpol (1985: 126) is that the presence of individuals or ideas is not enough to understand whether a particular set of ideas becomes influential. To what extent state agencies are open or closed to the new perspectives is just as important. In the case of advice disseminated by IOs, it is natural to consider this openness to be present, as such organizations consist of individual member countries, i.e. countries have voluntarily "joined" these organizations. This also is a sort of timing issue; the climate, or ideological context, as Kuhnle (1983) has referred to, must be favourable if a new idea is to be accepted. As Simmons and Elkins argue, learning may take place through communication and exchanges of information, something the IOs I study promote (2004: 175).

This means that circumstances and structures within the political system, the status and resources of the promoters (the power of the promoter), as well as the inherent merit of the idea (the power of the idea), influence the success of an idea. This is not the same as saying that ideas have no independent influence. It merely means that different aspects of the idea itself and the surroundings always matter. By recognizing this, we are able to understand both when new ideas result in change and when they do not (Berman 2001). I elaborate on how to separate between actors, ideas, and interests in the following section.

3.2.3. What is the relation between ideas, interests, actors, institutions and adaptation to external pressure?

Realists and materialists, as well as some political traditions like Marxism (Rueschemeyer 2006: 235), do not ascribe much influence to ideas – to them it is power and material interests which are driving political change. Literature dealing with ideas acknowledges the importance of interests and institutions, but claim that ideas may have an independent effect on policy change. Ideas, interests and institutions intersect and influence each other (Béland 2005). This is what is described above when focussing on conditions favourable or non-favourable to the effect of ideas. As Campbell states, it is more productive to investigate how ideas and interest interact and affect one another than upholding "the old idealist versus materialist debate about the

nature of policy making" (2002: 34). This debate is more or less irresolvable (Tannenwald 2005: 24). Hochschild (2006) provides one example of how one instead of discussing which are most important of ideas and interest can study their interaction. In her view, ideas may override interests (actions could be based on ideas of morality, hope, or prudence rather than interests), ideas may justify interests (reinforcing interests), or ideas may create interests (actions are directed by an understanding of your interest derived from an idea).

The same goes for adaptation to external pressure. Some would argue that recent welfare reforms are not the result of ideas about what to do, but simply a reaction to material conditions and challenges that needs to be addressed, e.g. population ageing.[45] There are several reasons to believe that this claim is too simple. First, as argued by Bönker;

> "The current renegotiation of the welfare state settlement in most OECD countries goes hand-in-hand with substantial changes in the policy beliefs and positions of major actors. The reforms that have been discussed and/or adopted are more than just the execution of economic imperatives or the by-product of changes in government. Already the simple observation that large part of these reforms have been brought about by social democratic governments suggests that reforms have been guided by new views on the role of state and market and on the goals, possibilities and instruments of social policy" (2005: 81).

Second, and underlined by the references to Blyth (2002) in the introduction, no crisis is self-evident, and must be interpreted. Several of the scholars I have referred to stress this, e.g. Hall (1989, 1993). As Hay and Rosamond claim, "it is the ideas that actors hold about the context in which they find themselves rather than the context itself which informs the way in which actors behave" (2002: 148).[46] Connected to this is that while certain situations may create a need to act, they do not automatically tell policy makers which measures they should take. As we know from the analyses of Castles (2004) or Hinrichs (2001) [2007], population ageing could be met by retrenchment

[45] One could also ask whether a *reaction* to such factors at all can be without some relation to *ideas*.
[46] "This in turn suggests the importance of differentiating clearly between: (i) the effects of globalization itself; (ii) the effects of having internalized popular constructions of globalization; and, indeed, (iii) the strategic and disingenuous appeal to globalization as a convenient justification for unpalatable reforms. All too frequently the second is mistaken for the first; the third discounted altogether" (Hay and Rosamond 2002: 150).

policies, like expenditure cutbacks and pension reforms or by measures which extends the welfare responsibilities of the state, such as new family policies and efforts to increase labour market participation rates. Third, researchers should not uncritically take economic and social challenges, e.g. population ageing, as the reason for a new policy. If, in a comparison of two units, the presence or absence of one feature is used to explain the outcome in question, then one risks drawing a wrong conclusion of causal relationships, if the decisive factor is not the particular feature but rather a process of diffusion and learning. This challenge is often referred to as Galton's problem; an outcome cannot be explained by domestic variables, but rather by interaction between states (Jahn 2006: 409, see also Karvonen 1981, 1994). For instance, examining the possible influence of Bismarck's social insurance policies, Kuhnle (1981) finds support for diffusion in the case of early Norwegian social insurance policies, less so for other Nordic countries. Fourth, the work of Weyland (2005) on diffusion processes shows that the adaptation-view cannot be entirely correct. Weyland starts out from the observation that "countries that are at very different levels of economic, social, and political development" (2005: 262) choose similar strategies, suggesting that domestic functional needs cannot explain reforms, because their very different points of departure should lead to different strategies. A similar point is that many of the problems, e.g. falling birth rates and low female employment rates, have existed for a long time, thus making it unlikely that reforms are due to problem pressure alone.

Based on his observations, Weyland formulates research questions that are very similar to mine; what drives emulation decisions? What are the motives? How does it happen? This moves attention from allegedly forced adaptation, due to external pressure, to the voluntary use of foreign models, as described by Dobbin et al. (2007) (cf. section 3.2.1). One benefit of an idea-based approach is the possible improved understanding of why countries with very different economic situations exert similar policies, which cannot be explained by structural conditions like economy or demography alone. Should Norway, having almost no unemployment (around 2 percent) and a budget surplus of 19,3 percent of GDP, apply the same unemployment policies as Germany, a country with a government deficit, an unemployment rate of

almost 7,5 percent and a public debt of 1 577 242 million Euro?[47] *Learning* gains importance. It helps us understand why former defenders of welfare arrangements suddenly promote retrenchment or extension, as the quote above from Bönker (2005) draws attention towards. Moreover, ideational accounts of politics take as their point of departure that actors may "defy the constraints of political and social structures" (Lieberman 2002: 698).

Still, it is important to recognize that learning from ideas can be based on different motives. Jack Levy (1994) underlines how learning and policy change is not the same thing, and that genuine learning must be differentiated from the rhetorical/strategic use of experience to "prove" a position. Levy also differentiates between causal and diagnostic learning. The former regards consequences and strategies, whereas diagnostic learning is about *initial conditions*; how the current situation, problems, and goals are to be understood. This may help us understand situations where actors facing similar problems choose different solutions; although diagnostic learning takes place, additional causal learning is not always the outcome of learning processes. Also, by telling us to separate learning from its causes, Levy points to a difference between a need for action caused by, for instance, an understanding of a rapidly ageing society, and the reaction of policy makers, for instance measures meant to increase fertility. This is, in my opinion, sometimes underemphasized in literature on welfare state change, since there is always more than one alternative available to politicians.

Another issue is the question of the kind of learning which takes place. Is it rational and purposeful, or incidental? One could ask whether we witness a search for the best policy options offered by other actors (rational problem-solving), or is it more incidental as Kingdon (1995) shows that it can be when solutions wait for problems ("coupling", cf. also Cohen, March and Olsen 1972). Moreover, Berman (2001) presents two views upon why actors support new ideas. It may be due to genuine conviction that the idea in question will benefit society in general (open), or more tactical to "justify and further self-interested agendas" (2001: 235). To separate

[47] All figures refer to 2006, 2007, or 2008, and are taken from Eurostat Selected Principal European Economic Indicators, accessed 28.10.2008, available at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1194,47773485,1194_47782287:1194_66724556&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

rational from tactical political learning regarding, for instance electoral success, is problematic (Radaelli 2007). Although an interesting discussion, Zutavern argues that it is of less analytical value to distinguish between tactical and "true" intentions, as the most interesting question is whether ideas play a role, and not for which reasons (2007: 3). Related to these questions is the one on how to disentangle the effect of ideas from other factors. Schmidt admits that this is a difficult undertaking but that this should not keep researchers from asking when ideas and discourses "serve to reconceptualize interests rather than just reflect them, to chart new institutional paths instead of simply following old ones, and to reframe cultural norms rather than only reify them" (2006: 114). This important issue will be discussed in the methods chapter, focussing, among other things, on the importance of actors.

3.2.4. What the review has showed

I have reviewed and presented central contributions in the literature on ideas, discourses, policy networks, learning, diffusion, and transfer. More specifically, literature concerned with international sources for national policy has been identified providing particularly relevant theoretical perspectives for my project. The insights from this literature can be summarized as follows.

Ideas shape preferences and structure choices, thus under certain conditions, leading to new policies. The mechanism that explains this process in much of the literature is learning about existing policies, or cause-effect beliefs, transmitted from other actors. Ideas can be classified as belonging to different categories, and in studies of the impact of international organizations (IOs), policy advice or programmes are particularly interesting ideas. Furthermore, circumstances within the political system, the status and resources of the promoters, and the inherent merit of the idea, all influence the success of an idea. Finally, the review has shown that it does not make sense to think of ideas, interests, actors, and institutions as separate explanatory strategies, but more as being important to a large or less large extent. As argued by Goldstein and Keohane (1993: 26), an idea-approach does not disregard the importance of interests, but focuses on how variation in ideas affects political action.

These insights will be discussed further in the next section, which presents my own view on how ideas can illuminate the family policy reforms I take an interest in.

3.3. The relationship between interests, institutions and ideas: a synthesis moving towards a new approach

I shall draw upon the reviewed literature when developing the idea-based approach to be used. In the next chapter, I will elaborate on the approach by delving into the challenge of isolating, measuring, and empirically applying, ideas in studies of family policy reforms.

I study the dissemination and possible impact of completely voluntary family policy advice. Learning is an important part of the approach I develop for several reasons. First, as the review above shows, learning is central in many of the approaches relying on ideational impact. Using ideas to understand change means that learning becomes the central mechanism, as actors must first become aware of and be persuaded by the new ideas. Second, there are institutionalized (and more informal) processes going on within international organizations, which are explicitly meant to generate learning. These may be hypothesised as having effects, thus warranting examination of learning mechanisms. Participation in such forums for the exchange of ideas, i.e. interaction through reviews, seminars, fact-finding-missions, and conferences, is the closest I may come to study the causal impact of a mechanism such as learning.

My analysis directs particular attention towards what kind of influence international organizations may have on the development of national family policy. In doing this, I recognize that family policy is a rather new field for such organizations, and the EU does not even have a Treaty base for family policy. An important research question in itself is thus what kind of initiatives can be identified at the level of international organizations. I also briefly consider what role individual countries, Member States as well as Non-Member States, may have in the field. This leaves us with two possible *agents of learning*; international organizations, such as the EU and OECD, and individual countries. As Yee (1996: 92) notes, institutions control the

entry of ideas into policy-making, and the degree to which policy makers are exposed to these ideas. I examine the role of the EU and OECD in facilitating learning, by inviting Member States to the exchange of ideas, exposing them to updated research, best practice, and comparing their current performance with this; playing the "idea game". In short, IOs make lessons available for Member States.[48]

Being aware of an idea is of course never a sufficient condition for policy-adoption. Ideas must be mediated and reacted upon by actors. Actors play a crucial role, as they, for various reasons, e.g. *persuasion, learning or self-interests*, support or discard ideas. Also, ideas may obstruct just as much as they may foster policy change (Fleckenstein 2007: 15). As such, IOs may both promote and hinder policy reform. To try to distil the pure effect of an idea via one mechanism seems to me difficult, because actors and institutions will always matter for the effect of the idea in question. As noted by O'Connor (2005) and Béland (2005), ideational influence takes place within institutional arrangements, and actors must necessarily support ideas if they are to become influential. This might seem self evident and trivial, but it draws attention to an important point; without expecting to be able to establish "tipping points" (Berman 2001: 240), or predict when ideas meet approval, and thus "succeed", one important aim of my study is to shed light on which conditions are favourable for the influence of specific ideas.[49] I will supplement the idea literature with some factors which increase our understanding of this issue. What I seek is an interaction between the level of ideas and the level of actual policy that may shed light on whether country A carries out welfare reforms based on specific ideas.

The *object of learning*, or "what is learned", is ideas of policies and programmes. I include both very specific programmes, such as increase of childcare coverage for a certain age group, and more general policy ideas like *reconciliation of work and family life* and *sustainability of the welfare state*. I elaborate on this in the next chapter by way of a framework developed by Campbell (1998, 2002).

The next part of my approach regards the actors who are learning. As seen in the literature review, different perspectives focus on different parts of the policy-

[48] In chapters 5 and 6, I elaborate on the learning processes mentioned briefly in this section.
[49] Tipping point means that an idea crosses a threshold and gets its own dynamics, independent of the policy makers that promoted the idea in the beginning (cf. Marcussen 2002: 172).

making process. Focussing on the persuasion of the public through e.g. a communicative discourse as found in Schmidt (2000), would make voters and citizens the learning actors. Instead I focus more on how policy makers, such as high level politicians and bureaucrats, learn.

An important problem within the literature on ideas is the (insufficient) specification of causal mechanisms, or how ideas result in policy change. I focus on learning, which I understand as a result of exposure to ideas. The processes at international level, which bring together policy makers to discuss social policy, provide the environment where learning may take place. However, it is important to stress that I share the view of Beckman (2005: 86), arguing that when explaining policy change as a result of new understandings and motives, e.g. to learn how to improve a policy program, then more specific mechanisms than these *understandings* and *motives* are hardly possible to identify. The explanandum and explanans are so close already. Learning is thus a kind of *intervening variable* between the independent variable *agency* and the dependent variable *policy change*, which is difficult to observe (Bennett and Howlett 1992: 290). Still, it is not enough to explain learning by saying that an actor wanted to learn. How ideas gain influence and credit must be studied further. And as will be discussed in the chapter on methodology; if you cannot show that foreign information has been used, then the new policy might just as well stem from general or domestic social and economic development (Bennett 1991: 32). In the empirical chapters I will refer to reports, conferences, and formulation of policy ideas by the EU and the OECD as policy instruments which could be studied to see whether learning can account for domestic welfare reforms (Orenstein 2006: 5-6).

The last part of my approach deals with the outcome of ideas disseminated by the agents of learning. This is the answer to why and when an idea causes change. It is impossible to develop a model which predicts the effect in any given case. Several important factors may be identified, however, emphasizing, in short, how the idea's success is related to characteristics of the domestic agenda. Such factors include the perceived existence of a problem, power, and interests of different actors and institutions. Still, ideas may affect what actors view as their interests. In other words, focussing on learning does not mean that interests and structure are left out. As

stressed by Bennett and Howlett (1992: 290), learning must always take place within a given structure of power and authority. Moreover, the outcome may be anything from a pure copy to a loose synthesis of the idea in question (Rose 1991, Evans and Davies 1999). Also, although ideas may convince actors, domestic economic, political, or bureaucratic constraints may prevent implementation of learning (Levy 1994: 290). Thus, one should also study learning that does not result in policy change. This view recognizes the two-step character of learning; learning takes place and then it might influence behaviour (Levy 1994: 291).

Focussing on the role of IOs and the outcome of ideas, I limit my analysis to the stages Tannenwald (2005: 30) refers to as the transmission, reception, and implementation of ideas. This means that I pay less attention to her first stage, the origins and production of ideas. This is because this is both difficult and of less importance to my study: Tracing origins implies an infinite regress, since there is no logical place to stop the process of tracing an idea (Kingdon 1995: 73).[50] Instead, Kingdon advises us to look at how ideas gain influence, and what they result in.

As discussed in the review sections above, it is also a difficult task to separate ideas and interests. Imagine the introduction of a new welfare scheme which enables parents to stay at home with their new born child while still receiving salary. This might result in increased fertility rates, since it improves the situation for families with children, and as such it reflects an idea disseminated, for instance, by research communities. However, it may also reflect a more interest based action; family policy as an election-strategy to win support from voters with children. An article in Der Spiegel (2007a) presents the latter to be an important reason behind the newly legislated German Elterngeld-reform. Allegedly, the German conservative party, CDU, with the help of opinion poll researchers, identified family policy to be a strategic theme in the coming elections of 2009. What this example illustrates is that an idea sometimes coincides with an interest. Probably, exactly those ideas which both serve a public aim and the interest of one actor, stand the best chance of success. Related to

[50] One could even ask whether it is fair, possible and/or relevant to demand ability to identify the source of an idea. The important fact is that once ideas become known and spread, they can serve an independent effect on thinking and action of actors. This is also a question of how far back in time you want to go to explain something.

this is the point made by McNeil (2006: 347), that malleable ideas are most successful, implying that ideas fitting different interpretations and interests have better chances than other ideas. In my analysis it is also assumed that the power of ideas is strengthened if they are accepted by, and further disseminated, by influential international organizations. This underlines the importance of the institutional setting (Hall 1989).

As I have stated, to identify one single mechanism ideas work through is more or less impossible, but learning is central. I now move on by discussing a study which sheds light on the importance of ideas, but unfortunately not in an adequate manner.

3.4 The challenge: Why some of the current studies inadequately explain welfare reforms

In *The Dual Transformation of the German Welfare State*, Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser (2004) provide an overview of the development within German unemployment schemes, old age insurance, and family policies, over the period 1975-2003. They conclude that Germany has gone through a "dual transformation". On one side, there has been a substantial reduction of what is offered to the unemployed and retired. At the same time, family-oriented benefits have been substantially expanded.

As I did in section 3.1, Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser argue that theories relying on political, institutional, and socio-economic explanations, e.g. party competition or financial difficulties, are insufficient. They are rejected as direct causes for the reforms because other policy responses than the ones chosen were possible. Instead they apply a constructivist approach. The hypothesis is that the main cause of the dual transformation was "the construction of new dominant interpretative patterns among the political elite – namely, that the policy change was primarily caused by a significant change in the political discourse" (2004: 4).

Interpretative patterns are said to "combine various themes, set preferences among them, link the positions (pro or con) with the various themes, and set the various themes in relation to abstract values, which at the same time connect the themes on a generalised level" (2004: 110). In their approach, causal beliefs about

socio-economic challenges enter into the political discourse, and out of this grow new interpretative patterns, leading to the reforms Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser describe as a dual transformation (2004: 111). The authors identify several interpretative patterns contradicting earlier principles of the German welfare state (2004: 127).

As empirical validation of their hypothesis, they point to the interpretative patterns that became hegemonic. The way the Left has changed its mind is the main reason given for the reforms in the labour market and pensions (2004: 117). With regard to family policy, it is said that the Christian Democrats dropped some of their traditional views (2004: 135), and thereby became open to reforms. There are few references to more specific reasons. One exception may be how the modernisers among Social Democrats got the upper hand in the party, which is mentioned briefly once (2004: 125).

While it is an important task to identify changes in the views of political parties and while the argument that parties have adopted new policies is compelling, this approach leaves us with little more knowledge about why the reforms really happened. It is a description of what took place and not how it came about. I share Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser's opinion, in claiming that "differences between the parties can be overcome over time and can lead to the construction of new interpretative patterns which will guide social policy development" (2004: 139), but in my opinion it is not enough to identify such interpretative patterns. One should try to explain where they stem from and why these new patterns gain hegemony. This explanation must include more than reference to changes in political actors' opinions and line of argumentation (2004: 151). This is a good start, but how the ideas gain credence must be investigated further. When stopping here, the concordance between a new idea and reforms is not as convincing as it could be, and does not go beyond correlation, being only a beginning towards exploring change. The question becomes; what are the factors on which basis new ideas were constructed?

Interpretative pattern has similarities with the discourse definition of Taylor-Gooby and Daguerre (2002) presented earlier. However, how interpretative patterns affect policies is not clear enough. The content of interpretative pattern is rather vague and the sources for changes in interpretative patterns are lacking. Paraphrasing Albert

Yee (1996); there is a difference between showing that an interpretative pattern leads to a certain policy and understanding how this pattern arises and gains influence. The trust in the interpretative pattern-explanation is weakened when the second question is left unanswered. Instead of saying how the political discourse causes reforms, Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser add another intervening variable called *interpretative pattern*.

In sum, the point concerning causal mechanisms is that they, in a convincing way, should show how actors accept ideas, institutionalize and act on the basis of them. The mechanism must explain the gap between the idea and its implementation; why the idea leads to a certain domestic policy. As Elster emphasizes, it is not enough to cite the cause (1989: 4). Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser say that policy change results from the actors changing their minds, but do not explicitly discuss why the actors changed their minds, ending up with a preliminary description, more than explanation, as the main result. Such studies are not entirely successful, and their problem lies in the absence of depth, meaning that these studies are less interesting than they could have been if they had taken up the challenge of the now left unanswered "how-question". As emphasized already, I do not expect to be able to identify one determining causal mechanism, but I will investigate whether ideas behind national welfare reforms may stem from IOs. Let me now bring this chapter to a close by summarizing, before I propose a more fruitful approach to the study of ideas in the chapter on methodology.

3.5 Summary and final remarks

This chapter has reviewed literature which in various ways applies an idea-based approach, and outlined my own idea-based approach to family policy reforms, relying on elements from the reviewed literature. Summarized in one sentence, this approach argues that ideas have an independent influence on welfare reforms, by affecting views and preferences of political actors. This chapter has offered thoughts on why, how, and when ideas matter, the question of the effect of ideas versus pure economic challenges, and the relationships between actors, interests, and ideas. The answers to such questions contribute to theory on why and when politicians rely on what Brooks

(2007: 3) refers to as ”internationally-transmitted information”, an issue for which she calls for more research.

An idea-based approach runs the risk of tautological reasoning (empty statements, knowledge derived from itself) of the type “welfare reforms happen because actors change their minds”. Arguably, this is a pitfall in the literature (Blyth 1997: 236). As formulated by Hall;

> “(…) if we cannot say why one set of ideas has more force than another in a given case, we do not gain much explanatory power simply by citing ideas. In short, if we want to accord ideas an explanatory role in analysis of policy making, we need to know much more about the conditions that lend force to one set of ideas rather than another in a particular historical setting” (1989: 362).

Theory on ideas is an analytical tool enabling us to identify how policies are formed. It is relevant to study ideas per se, because international debate might influence the thinking of actors. To avoid tautological inferences it is also necessary to study the process of how the new reform agenda is developed, and here actors become relevant. I will show this by investigating the role of one particular kind of actor; IOs.

This chapter has described some weaknesses of an idea-based approach, such as a weak focus on causal mechanisms, how ideas become prominent, and the relationship between ideas, interests, and actors. When this approach is still applied it is for the following reasons: I consider it to be particularly suitable since family policy, as elaborated on in the introductory chapter, is less dominated by institutional legacies and veto players, and more open to outside influence than other areas of social policy. Furthermore, when studying the possible influence of international organizations in this area, one is left with ideas since IOs can (with a few exceptions) only produce non-binding policy advice in the form of policy ideas. In addition, I will try to fill some of the voids identified in the existing literature. For instance, I will study the possible learning processes within IOs (chapters 5 and 6). In the next chapter I discuss issues such as isolating the effect of, measuring, and empirically applying ideas, in studies of family policy reforms.

Chapter 4 How to study the influence of ideas

> ”Like subatomic particles, ideas do not leave much of a trail when they shift” (Hall 1993: 290).

I argue that family policy reforms may be driven by ideas just as much as socio-economic factors such as budget deficits. Ideas seem to have an impact in spite of the fact that many family policy reforms increase costs. Economic considerations are not unimportant, but I claim that ideas, and in this specific case, from abroad, about what kind of family policies one should pursue, may be important to understand why reforms are carried out the way they are. To study such diffusion or cross-border adoption of ideas and international influences in social policy is a demanding task. This chapter discusses methodological challenges, and presents the approach used in the following analysis. The chapter also presents family policy ideas, and provides an overview of the data sources the study relies on.

In short, the overall theme could be said to be concordance/non-concordance with internationally-transmitted policy ideas. If I should phrase my approach in the vocabulary of variables, it would be like this: change/non-change in national family policy, in terms of the provision of benefits in cash and kind, e.g. the introduction of new instruments, is what is being studied, and is thus the dependent variable.[51] I seek to analyze whether advice from international or national actors (governments), being the independent variables, have resulted in changed policies. In other words, what degree of cross border ideational influence on national family policy is there? However, as Dolowitz and Marsh (1996, 2000) argue, one should treat ideas and policy transfer as both dependent and independent variables: what kind of ideas exist, what it is about an idea that makes it effective, and how the ideas gain credit, must be investigated further. In the next two chapters, the family policy ideas of IOs are

[51] Thus, changes in institutional characteristics and not overall level of social spending are chosen. For instance, retrenchment in terms of cutbacks alone does not cover the instances of expansion that we witness within family policy (Clasen 2005: 15). On the dependent variable problem in comparative welfare state analysis, see Green-Pedersen (2004), Clasen (2005) and Clasen and Siegel (2007).

discussed, meaning that what is considered independent variables in chapters 7 and 8 on country reforms are dependent variables in chapters 5 and 6. National family policy reforms are obviously not the sole result of cross border influence. Socio-economic features like demographic change (population ageing, low birth rates), the country's economic situation, gender relations, values orientations, and public attitudes towards family life, as well as characteristics of the political system (e.g. centralized-unitary or decentralized-federal government), play a role. These are variables I do not analyze specifically, but, as discussed in chapter 2 and 3, acknowledge that matter a great deal.

There exists no simple cause-effect relationship between ideas and policy decisions. Such relations can hardly be demonstrated fully. Still, influential actors can be identified, and the framing and dissemination of ideas as well as their content and reception can be studied. Following a discussion of the concept of ´influence`, I shall outline how I intend to study the framing, dissemination, and reception of ideas.

4.1 What is influence?

Terms like "influence", or "impact", are often used without being defined. This is problematic because such everyday concepts are not straightforward, and have several difficulties connected to them, for instance that they cannot easily be measured. Much the same may be said of concepts like "effect", "outcome", or "cause" (Barbier 2005: 419), concepts used uncritically in many connections. Büchs (2006) stresses that several problems arise when examining the "influence" of unbinding policy processes, such as the Open Method of Coordination. "Influence" is not directly observable, only change, and rarely the reason why something changed, can be seen. Ascribing an actor influence to a matter is based only on indirect evidence. In addition, as Büchs (2006: 57) reminds us, multi-causality is the rule rather than the exception in the social sciences. This observation is particularly relevant in studies of "soft" policy processes, since they have no claim of being followed up, and are thus reliant on voluntary action by national actors, who for different reasons may or may not refer to best practices, disseminated by IOs. A soft stimulus from the international level requires an active response at the national level to gain influence (Büchs 2006: 59). Also, the kind of

influence we are dealing with in such non-binding policy exchanges, are, according to Büchs, inherently concealed, implying that actors have tactical reasons for admitting or denying that such processes exert an influence on national policy-making (2006: 59).

Mörth argues that it is difficult to assess the impact of the EU because European and national processes are not separate processes; they depend on each other (2003: 173, see also Zeitlin 2005a: 457).[52] She also draws attention to another problem with "impact studies". If the dependent variable is defined narrowly you might overlook change that takes place that is not completely identical to the EU-policy serving as the point of departure; "EU policies and legalizations do not travel as ready-made packages" (Mörth 2003: 160, cf. also Citi and Rhodes 2007: 10). It is not always obvious for policy makers what they need to do in order to comply with, or obtain good results in a policy field.

In line with what Büchs (2006) and Mörth (2003) point out, I expect to see little direct impact of supranational advice, but rather signs of how the international level has resulted in, or been used to start, debates and the provision of arguments. This is also an aspect of "influence", although not of a direct and obvious kind. Such issues should be kept in mind when outlining the empirical research methods to be used in the study of cross border transmission of family policy ideas. Section 4.4 elaborates on such challenges, but let me first present my empirical approach, followed by a classification of ideas (4.3).

[52] This also emphasizes how a variable oriented approach is difficult to apply since it is difficult to systematically keep independent and dependent variables apart when studying a policy-making process which has many phases before a final decision (i.e. a certain value in the dependent variable) is reached. Radaelli also refers to the issue of interlinked national and international processes (2003: 50). He proposes multi-causal analysis as the solution, in order to establish the relative impact of Europeanization. Unfortunately this is very comprehensive and time-consuming. But an analysis of alternative or complementary explanations to ideas, e.g. interests or perception of problem pressure, would increase the trust in the final conclusion on whether foreign ideas did matter for German and Norwegian family policy reforms. However, as I have argued in chapter 3, I have chosen ideational theory because I consider other explanatory approaches less promising for my cases. Thus I will not offer any comprehensive analysis of complementary explanations.

4.2 How can ideas exert influence? How can this influence be studied empirically?

My study of cross-border influences in family policy is particularly concerned with the role of international actors such as the EU and OECD. The first step in an investigation of their possible influence is to identify what kind of policies Germany and Norway had when being exposed to international advice, and then present the views of IOs. Chapters 5 (EU) and 6 (OECD) will provide both an overview of, as well as a classification of, family policy ideas at the international level during (approx.) the last ten years (1998-2008), while chapters 7 (Germany) and 8 (Norway) will start by presenting country specific advice from IOs and recent reforms.

The approach to answer the research questions formulated might be considered a mix of the process-tracing and concordance methods: *Concordance* because I compare the policy advice issued by IOs with national reforms in Germany and Norway and see whether they are in concordance with each other or not. Similarities indicate (but in themselves only indicate) possible influence, while non-similarity indicates the opposite. *Process tracing* because I try to identify processes whereby ideas might have been transformed from one actor to another by searching for traces of influence in different sources. According to George and Bennett, process tracing is about tracing links between possible causes and observed outcomes (2005: 6). It is a method which enables the researcher to "eliminate some explanations and increase our confidence in others" (2005: 149). This is about as far as this analysis can take us.

The discussion about cross border influence must be guided by some criteria, such as whether Germany and Norway participate in exchange of ideas, timing (whether reforms come (soon) after advice is issued), and whether national and international arguments for reform are similar. To establish these aspects, consultation (interviews) of key actors in the process and parliamentary debates are useful. In a classical diffusion study of Swedish legislation to Finland, Karvonen identifies three empirical challenges that must be tackled in a study such as mine (1981: 55). [53] These challenges resemble the criteria I have just mentioned:

[53] The literature on ideas contains many suggestions for research designs. In addition to the researchers mentioned here, Levy (1994) provides eight criteria, Dolowitz three (2000a: 33) or four (2000b: 39).

1. Demonstrate a basis for learning; policy makers must be informed and interested in foreign experiences,
2. Demonstrate similarity between the policy ideas and the reforms in terms of principles, benefit levels, administration, and so on, and
3. Demonstrate contact between the influential actor and the influenced country

Stone has a similar way of substantiating policy transfer, adding that one should be able to demonstrate that the policy adoption is not caused by domestic factors alone, or similar modernizing forces taking place in several countries (1999: 56). As we know from Bennett (1991: 32): if you cannot show that foreign information has been used, then the new policy might just as well stem from domestic social, economic, and political development. But, still, one can not rule out that foreign information and influence is at stake: national actors may, as mentioned, for various reasons not refer to foreign inspiration. Foreign influence can be real, but hidden. The occurrence of policy A in country X after country Y has introduced policy A does not prove that diffusion has taken place: whether diffusion has taken place can only be established by elaborate process-tracing, and even then it may not be clear-cut, because national actors sometimes refuse to admit inspiration or learning from outside.

Taking the considerations of these scholars as my point of departure, I will move forth in the following way. First, ideational influence and the concept *idea* must be defined (Campbell 1998: 401). This was done in the previous chapter (section 3.2.1). *Ideas* are the views upon, and advice related to, family policy, issued by international organizations or at least present in the discourse at this level. Ideas may be traced empirically if defined and operationalized as social policy views, advice, and specific programmes recommended by the EU and OECD.[54]

According to Deacon (2007), there is a "global contest of ideas" on social policy taking place, in which different non-state actors participate. The ideas in

[54] Since ideas are operationalized as programmes and specific policy prescriptions, one could ask why I apply literature on ideas instead of strictly focussing on the issue of compliance or non-compliance with international advice, i.e. whether reforms conform to prescribed policies (e.g. Falkner et al. 2005). The reason is that much of the ideas in question cannot be called programmes. Instead they reflect more overall ideas, e.g. reconciliation of work and family life, rights and duties, activation or sustainability of the welfare state (see chapters 5 and 6). The literature on ideational impact may illuminate the reception of such ideas. Also, compliance literature is more concerned with coercion and sanctions in focussing on instances of binding cooperation (Checkel 2001).

question are given different tags in the scholarly literature. For instance, Deacon (2007) writes about social policy *prescriptions* for national social policy, the OECD speaks of *recommendations* or *policy lessons*, Armingeon and Beyeler (2004) about *ideas* and *recommendations*. All of these are included when I use the term family policy ´idea game`, but in the main I choose to use the term *idea*, which is consistent with my theoretical approach as well as recent literature, applied for instance by Ervik, Kildal and Nilssen (forthcoming 2009).

As alluded to above, the family policy ideas of international actors will be presented in the following chapters. The empirical investigation of German and Norwegian family policy reforms (chapters 7 and 8) shall thus start with a closer description of IOs´ specific advice to these two countries, a presentation of national reforms, and a comparison thereof (concordance method). In a second step, the question of timing needs to be considered. If reforms should be a result of foreign ideas they must come relatively soon after recommendations were issued, or at least not before.[55] Third, it must be possible to find evidence of contact (processes allowing learning to take place) between the exporter and importer of ideas. This may be participation in international reviews and studies, voluntary exchange of best practice in conferences, and so on. I shall search for specific processes through which ideas may be transmitted, and study such processes.[56] Whether the EU and OECD have played a role in pushing family reforms forward can be answered by investigating documents, parliamentary debates, and conduct interviews with people participating in specific learning processes. As Schmidt and Radaelli (2004a) ask; do best practice and benchmarking provide resources and cognitive drives, or are they irrelevant to national policy makers? I can hardly specify a causal mechanism between family policy ideas and subsequent reforms, but I may identify learning processes involving dissemination of ideas (process tracing).

The OECD and EU can influence social policy, mainly through voluntary adoption at the national level of their advice. They are both applying peer reviews and OMC

[55] Although ideas may spread before they are formulated as clear recommendations or advice.
[56] One note of caution should be made; ideas can be transmitted by means other than through meetings and physical contact. Reports, academic studies or newspaper articles are possible channels which are even harder to trace.

similar-methods (Bisopoulos 2003, Schäfer 2006). Peer reviews can be considered organized learning processes where transmission of ideas is the goal. They open up for detailed studies since they, though admittedly to various degrees, encompass mutual meetings, drawing up of position papers and advice, descriptions of challenges and possible solutions – much of this available in writing as reports, minutes, and statements (Pagani 2002, European Commission 2006d, OECD 2007a). Here we should expect to observe the transmission of political ideas and value judgements between the participants.

The reason why ideas presented in such peer reviews are thought to have an effect is simple: these ideas are spread both in writing and orally through direct dialogue and discussion. In EU peer reviews, written statements are prepared by each country dealing explicitly with the question of transferability within given deadlines. Actors must make statements on ideas, whether ideas are considered good or bad. Peer reviews could thus involve some sort of learning mechanisms. Since peer reviews on family policy have been applied to a limited extent, especially in the EU, I mainly draw on participation in international reviews and studies, as well as voluntary exchange of best practice at conferences.

One probable effect of international organizations and their strong emphasis on family policies is that questions of necessity for such policies disappear. At the national level it is no longer necessary to argue that increased spending, or a stronger emphasis on family issue, are an advantage. Instead one can move straight to discussions of "what kind", "how" and "when". The set up of peer reviews (e.g. procedures, participating actors, and policy fields covered) is described in more detail in chapters 5 and 6. The chapters on Germany and Norway will open with some assumptions on the importance of these processes, which will guide the analysis.

Finally, following Radaelli (2007), I will "regard references in policy documents and interviews to international organizations, other foreign experiences as well as explicit intentions to copy these as clear evidence of learning". In addition to direct references, I look for problem diagnoses and cause-effect beliefs as signs of ideational influence. After all, policy transfer must be a conscious process (Evans and Davies

1999: 328). Based on David Dolowitz´ five sources of information (2000b: 32) I have listed altogether nine sources where references or signs of ideas can be identified:

1. official references to media reports
2. studies commissioned by the government
3. official references to studies published by independent groups and organizations, e.g. the use of statistics or comparisons provided by such actors
4. government records (e.g. press releases or policy papers which contain official references to ideas and concrete examples of foreign influence)
5. personal interviews (e.g. self-statement as influential by representatives of international organizations or statements of such ideas as influential by stakeholders at national level)
6. websites and newsletters of ministries
7. media coverage, e.g. interviews with officials
8. participation at international conferences and speeches in e.g. parliamentary debates
9. bills (both description of and sometimes giving the reasons for the new law)

The list can be further extended with some indicators mentioned by Seeleib-Kaiser and Fleckenstein (2007: 440-441);

10. fact finding missions to countries/institutions
11. dialogue with experts in corresponding countries
12. workshops with academic experts and practitioners

This list of 12 points will serve as a check list of factors to demonstrate the extent of policy transfer, and in an effort to link domestic reforms to foreign influence. The point in examining such sources is simple: “Demonstrating that there was information available, and that agents of change were aware of it, is a key aspect of any analysis of policy transfer because just showing that policies look alike is not evidence of transfer” (Dolowitz 2000b: 33). Thus, I let this list guide me when I look for traces of foreign influence, but I will not compare the list point by point, in a rigid manner, with

my empirical material. Also, since this list refers to a great spectre of data sources, I will not be able to investigate all in detail. My main data sources will be parliamentary debates, expert interviews, and government records.

My approach may be referred to as an "idea-analysis". According to Beckman (2005: 12), an "idea-analysis" can be separated into content and functional analysis. The former focuses on the quality of the arguments under scrutiny, while the latter is concerned with how one understanding meets approval, which is closer to the aim of my study.[57] Beckman also distinguishes between analyses which are idea-centred and actor-centred (2005: 17). Since my analysis is concerned with what role ideas disseminated by international organizations play for domestic family policy, my analysis can be said to be both idea- and actor-centred.

The list above provides an overview of data sources, and section 4.5 presents the data I use. However, finding traces of ideas in such sources does not, as emphasized, prove once and for all that the reform in question was the result of ideational influence. Methodological challenges involved in using this check list will be discussed, but, first I present a framework for ideational analysis that will be used in chapters 5 and 6 to identify the policy ideas promoted by the EU and OECD.

4.3 Campbell and the classification of ideas

Campbell's typology of ideas is elaborated on in two articles that are slightly different. His article from 1998 identifies four categories based on two dimensions; the first, specific, concrete ideas versus more general and underlying assumptions and, the second, cognitive versus normative ideas. The four categories are *paradigmatic ideas*, *programmes*, *frames*, and *public sentiments*. In the second article from 2002, the two dimensions are used less explicitly and the number of categories is slightly changed, and extended to five, adding world culture and substituting sentiments with normative frameworks. Each type of idea exerts a different kind of influence on policy-making. Here I combine the two articles, but rely mostly on the 1998-version.

[57] As referred to in chapter 3, this approach is different from discourse analysis. See Beckman (2005: 88) and Schmidt and Radaelli (2004a: 193 and 2004b: 365) for a longer discussion.

Paradigmatic ideas are often referred to as ideologies. Such ideas are overall views on the functions of social policies. Campbell (2002: 22) uses Esping-Andersen's (1999) work as one way to exemplify this kind of idea; assumptions about the extent to which families have responsibility for helping family members have consequences for how much state activity the welfare state encompasses. Such ideas identify problems, and set agendas, by giving objectives (López-Santana 2006). Campbell explains how this type of idea can contribute to change in policies: "Paradigmatic effects are profound because *they define the terrain of policy discourse*. When programmatic ideas fit the dominant paradigm they appear natural and familiar and, as a result, are more likely to appeal to policy makers than alternatives that do not" (1998: 390, my emphasis). As Campbell states, and as will become clear from the following analysis of Germany (chapter 7), certain welfare reforms are more or less impossible if policy makers cannot rid themselves of one paradigm, and replace it with another view of the public responsibility and scope for activity towards families.

The second category, *programmatic ideas*, offers concrete solutions to problems, and includes causal views. The idea of the benefits of a certain kind of parental leave scheme is an example of this. Another example is the idea of the provision of *childcare to children aged 1-3 years*. Common for both examples are that they have the potential to exert influence due to their offer of specific solutions to specific challenges. When solutions are available, problems seldom remain unchanged (Kingdon 1995). However, it is important to state that although ideas of this kind exert influence, by providing solutions to concrete challenges, this does not mean that these solutions are the only alternatives, or even the best alternatives. This insight can, as in chapter 3, be illustrated by reference to Castles (2004), and the debate on pension reforms. Labour market reforms, e.g. reducing early retirement, increasing female employment, and rising retirement age, are potential measures that can be taken before pension reforms that cut entitlement levels (Castles 2004: 124).

Sometimes such concrete ideas originate in well established policies of one actor (country), making the organization in question more of a mediator than an ideational first mover (Marcussen 2002). The next chapters will show that in the field of family policy, Scandinavian policies often serve as such programmatic ideas.

According to Campbell, programmatic ideas are most commonly found in policy briefs or position papers. To this I would add various reports such as working papers and expert studies, and, importantly for my study; advice from the EU and OECD. Their ideas are expressed as concrete recommendations, more subtle advice and political objectives.

A third type of idea in Campbell's typology is *frames*. Framing means making solutions acceptable, and, as said by Campbell, such frames appear in speeches, press releases, and public statements (1998: 394). The frames used by politicians should correspond with public sentiments. One obvious example of a frame used in debates on welfare state reforms is the concept of economic globalization (Campbell 2002: 27). As shown for instance by Yeates (2001), Rieger and Leibfried (2003) or Castles (2004), the presentation of an unavoidable, structural threat to national welfare has justified many (retrenchment) reform proposals over the last years. Typical ideas in the area of family policy would be the ideal of freedom of choice, how men should take responsibility for their children, or more general "evidence" of need for action expressed through studies, such as the OECD PISA-study (Programme for International Student Assessment), where lack of knowledge among school-children is documented. This category of ideas resembles the concept of discourse as an interactive process, as applied by Schmidt and Radaelli (2004), as well as communicative discourse (Schmidt 2002) (cf. chapter 3).

The last type is ideas as *public sentiments*. Ideas must be politically legitimate and acceptable in order to get necessary support in the electorate. Public sentiments thus restrict what politicians may do. The scope of action is indicated in public opinion polls, media reports, interest organizations and so on. Within the area of family policy I consider the following ideas important: concerns about child poverty, dominant views on gender roles, e.g. the earlier strong view of working mothers in Germany as "Rabenmütter" (negligent, selfish mothers),[58] single disturbing cases of abuse or maltreatment of children, and a more general feeling of lagging behind other countries.

[58] While it is probably correct to say that Germany is now going through a similar development as Norway did some decades ago, the debate about whether (the youngest) children should preferably be cared for by their parents or in institutions is still relevant in Norway. A recent book has sparked a new debate in the media (Tveitereid 2008). Borg, Backe-Hansen and Kristiansen (2008) compile and assess existing studies in the area.

Table 4.1 summarizes the different kinds of ideas. As I will show in chapters 5 and 6, this framework is helpful when analyzing policy ideas of international actors, but the categories are not always unambiguous.

Table 4.1: Overview of ideas based on Campbell´s typology (1998, 2002)

Type of idea	Characteristics and examples	Sources likely to unveil ideas
Paradigmatic	Overall views upon the functions of social policies, e.g. *public vs. individual responsibility for family issues*	Debates in and publications of international organizations
Programmatic	Concrete solutions, causal views, e.g. *childcare to children aged 1-3 years*	Policy briefs, position papers, reports, recommendations
Frames	Justification of the chosen policy, e.g. *freedom of choice*	Speeches, press releases, public statements
Public sentiments	Set the scope for legitimate and acceptable options, e.g. "*Rabenmütter*"	Public opinion polls, media reports, interest organizations

My main focus is whether policy makers are familiar with, convinced by, and/or use ideas expressed by international organizations. Thus, programmatic ideas, paradigmatic ideas and frames are most important. Sentiments are, in my opinion, less a category of its own than a kind of barrier that an idea must overcome in order to succeed, although this must not be understood as people's opinions not being legitimate input to policy-making.[59]

A related problem is that if all levels of policy-making are pervaded with ideas, then the distinction between what shall be explained and what explains becomes blurred. My intention is to analyze whether foreign ideas shed light on why concrete policy reforms happen. When the latter is more or less the same as the former, e.g. as in the advice on provision of childcare, then one risks that the explanation and the explained are equal. Here one must keep in mind that the research design, described in chapter 3, in fact partly relies on such similarity, as it is one sign of ideational influence of international organizations through the adoption of advice and

[59] Culture and opinions also matter for policy-making even if I do not focus on this. Cf. van Oorschot, Opielka and Pfau-Effinger (2008) for a recent analysis applying a cultural perspective on welfare.

recommendations (concordance), but we should be aware of possible circular reasoning.

Second, this problem is connected with the question of the power of ideas. I try to avoid terms like *causality* because I consider it impossible to demonstrate that ideas have *caused* reforms. Moreover, ideas and actors are inseparable, in the sense that actors and institutions will always matter for the effect of the idea in question. As O'Connor (2005) and Béland (2005) argue, ideational influence takes place within institutional arrangements and actors must support ideas if they are to become influential. What I study are international learning processes that may make it probable that country A carries out welfare reforms based on specific ideas.

4.4 Methodological challenges

The concordance method is pretty simple to carry out. In principle, it is no more than a comparison between advice and actual policy-making. However, the interpretation is complicated by several factors. First, correlation is not causation. This challenge can be met by combining the concordance method with process tracing, to try to decide whether correlation is causal or spurious (Bennett and George 2006: 183). Second, and as Beyeler (2004: 8) and Zeitlin (2005a: 453) argue, ideas promoted by one actor are not always exclusive to this actor. Family policy advice from the EU and OECD may have been developed by other international organizations or Member/Non-Member States. This means that even though a comparison between international recommendations and actual reforms reveals a strong degree of consistency, one cannot say for sure that reforms happened because of the recommendations in question. In other words, and to paraphrase Kuhnle (1981), it is difficult to isolate the effects of influence from international bodies from innovative nations or domestic macro characteristics (political, economic, and organizational). One must be able to identify influential actors who promote the policy in question, but also to "show evidence that their promotion increases the likelihood of policy adoption" (Dobbin et al. 2007: 457). If, for instance, the IOs have basically the same views toward family

policy as Norwegian policy makers, then it does not matter how the IOs argue.[60] We need evidence of a difference of opinion, or a new awareness of an issue among national actors, if IOs are to be credited influence. A description of the family policies as they were before the reforms is needed, and party programmes could be one source for evidence of changed opinions. This challenge may also be met by analyzing the justifications for the reforms. Even though macro characteristics, such as an increasing demographic burden, may convince policy makers of the need to act, it is rare that only one solution is available.[61] Therefore these policy makers´ choices of measures will often suggest where they have been inspired, not least in the way they justify their choices.

This is again connected to what Larsen and Goul Andersen (2007:1) call the main problem of studies on the impact of ideas; how to separate the impact of these ideas from other determinants of change, like interests and external problem pressure. They argue that the trust in ideas matter studies is increased if one can reject "objective problems", and preferences of politicians' and their voters, as the decisive factors behind the policy change (2007: 2). Although I do not think that this is entirely possible, as it would force the researcher to analyze only cases where ideas are not coinciding with preferences, and where the problem pressure is low or not existing, thus excluding highly interesting cases such as the recent German family policy reforms, I agree that one should try to isolate the effect of ideas. Ideally, one should be able to demonstrate that we would not witness reform X, had not some learning activity (from abroad) taken place (Bennett and Howlett 1992: 290). Regarding interests, party programmes and newspaper accounts may be useful to this aim. A comparison of the family policy reforms with the measures described in party programmes, indicates whether the reforms are in line with what could be seen as lying in the interest of the party, e.g. keeping promises and pleasing their voters, or whether parties changed their mind when gaining power. Press accounts can further illuminate this by discussing reactions from the electorate. The problem-pressure factor could be considered by analyzing the actual state of affairs; how pressing are

[60] But national actor may still draw on international actors for reasons of blame avoidance, legitimacy or authority.
[61] Cf. Castles (2004) for a discussion of such factors related to family policy reforms.

population ageing, child poverty or female inactivity rates (perceived to be)? However, as argued in this chapter, a comprehensive analysis of alternative explanations is beyond the scope of my analysis.

The application of a process tracing approach is vulnerable towards the problem of a lack of (visible) links between cause and outcome. One risks understating the effect of a variable if "the theory in question leaves no observable signature" (George and Bennett 2005: 218). As Fleckenstein (2008: 180) argues, official policy documents like draft legislation or ministerial papers for the public, do not always reveal which models have been used in the development of reforms. Ideas of the OECD or EU may, for instance, turn up in domestic debates without reference to the original source (Armingeon 2004: 239). In a study searching for cross-border influences, it is very interesting when written or oral sources refer directly to another actor's advice, and say that certain policies are promoted, introduced or implemented due to this advice. The data sources presented below include some examples of such direct references, but often the link is not that obvious. And even with direct references, one should remain critical, because of methodological challenges such as uploading, credit-claiming, blame-avoidance, and selection bias. I now treat these challenges in turn.[62]

Uploading means that Member States might try to turn their own policies, preferences, and proposals into the aim of the EU/OECD objectives and guidelines (Zeitlin 2005a: 454). To check whether international advice and national policy are in concordance is not convincing proof of foreign influence, if the advice originated with the very same country in the first place. The researcher could overrate the importance of the international organization in question, and it is rather easy to imagine examples of this for both my cases. It could be that Germany would work to make its planned measures within the family policy field the aim of the EU´s new *European Alliance for Families*, a forum for the exchange of best practices established under German EU Presidency in 2007, described closer in the next chapter, in order to draw on this when implementing their own policies. Similarly, one should be aware that, when the OECD is issuing a country note identifying challenges, e.g. for Norway´s childcare policies,

[62] For further critique of the process tracing method used to analyze the link between ideas and adoption of policies, see for instance Yee (1996: 77).

this organization, to a large extent, relies on a background report they have asked the country under review to prepare (chapter 6 describes this process closer). A more general example could be that the EU, at least according to Annesley (2007: 197, 201), has integrated much of its Member States´ activation policies in the Lisbon agenda. In such instances, the researcher could also face a danger of confirmation-bias; focussing on the possible foreign influence could make you blind towards evidence of other explanations (George and Bennett 2005: 217). Another problem is that we do not have the counterfactual, meaning that we do not know if a country would do as it did even if a recommendation was not issued by the EU or OECD. One should also not forget that politicians, bureaucrats, and others within the international organizations I study, always have a national background.

If not possible to overcome, one can at least reduce the danger of confirmation-bias and overrating of foreign influence, by investigating more than just the policy documents connected with the reform in question. Interviews with stakeholders and consultation of other written sources, such as party programmes, could reveal whether the reform was a result of plans going back in time, or is due to foreign influence.[63] Barbier warns us not to rely only on official texts, precisely for this reason:

> "The latter (´Brussels` arenas, my addition) potentially provide national governments with additional resources for legitimating their policy decisions at home and consolidating them: this explains why, despite reluctance from many Member states to accept increased roles for the Commission, the EES has continued to function rather successfully, in terms of the states´ expectations, and also why they have kept struggling about the ´best` construction of the discourse. It is certain that they accept additional resources at EU level to support policies and politics at home" (2004: 11).

[63] Another possible approach to shed light on my research questions would be to exploit daily newspaper coverage more. Could, for instance, the extent to which EU and OECD recommendations and advice are used and referred to in Norwegian public debates, be measured by searching digital media archives, e.g. by comparing the share of articles over time referring to IOs? Marcussen (2002: 194-201) partly draws on such an approach. In Norway, ATEKST (http://cdrom.ub.uib.no/web/atekst.htm) would provide one extensive digital media archive suitable for this. There is however – to the best of my knowledge - no German counterpart to ATEKST. Although sources like Nexis-Lexis (http://www.lexisnexis.com/de/business/home/home.do) allow you to search some newspapers, several important newspapers have their own archives where you have to pay for access.

Moreover, Weaver (1986) has shown that we should be aware of strategies of both credit claiming and blame avoidance when analyzing politics. Zeitlin formulates it like this regarding the OMC; "Member States governments may also have political reasons for playing up or down the domestic influence of OMC processes in National Action Plans and evaluation reports, connected with strategies of blame avoidance and credit claiming on the one hand and efforts to present themselves either as "good Europeans" or defenders of the national interest against Brussels on the other" (Zeitlin 2005b: 26). Sometimes policies inspired from abroad are presented as completely new, in order to be nationally acceptable (Jacobsson and Schmid 2002: 89). Yet another problem when dealing with public statements is that it is difficult to say whether a reference to influential actors is the result of policy learning or ex-post legitimation (Fleckenstein 2008: 180). Unfortunately, interviewed experts may also answer ex post facto ("after the fact") instead of ex-ante ("before the event"), to rationalize their actions. One way of checking the reliability is to compare oral statements with written sources.

Using only official documents limits the analysis to the final results of political negotiations. The analysis of documents should therefore be informed by interviews with key actors at the national and international level. Such interviews help ensuring that the interpretation of written sources is well-informed. Interviews introduce us to processes of policy-making and interaction between actors at the national and international level. They may illuminate reasons, rationalizations, and arguments informing an actor's understanding of the theme in question (Poortinga et al. 2004: 86). Combined with studies of documents, they help us understand the kind of ideas these actors are exposed to and how they are influenced by them.

Interview-research also has its problems. Is there, for instance, an interview-effect here, in the sense that respondents could mention Norway as an important "teacher" because they think this is what the Norwegian interviewer wants to hear? In other words, is Norway mentioned more often due to the fact that the interviewer is Norwegian? Such issues are important to keep in mind during the analysis.

Relying on a limited number (30) of expert interviews from four settings (two IOs and two countries), I recognize that the number is not big enough to draw too many conclusions. They should mainly be seen as complementing other sources.

Interviews are also sensitive to peoples´ recollection of incidents, as well as their wishes to present themselves as influential, with claims of credit and avoidance of blame. This must be considered when interpreting the data.

Parliamentary debates and related documents, such as white papers, provide a basis for analyzing how family policy ideas, proposals, and reforms are created, established and changed (Lundqvist 2007: 16). According to Berven (2005: 22, 53), there are several advantages with having data material in the form of parliamentary debates. They are readily available, they are comprehensive enough to allow politicians to explain their views in more detail than in brief TV-debates or newspaper interviews, and they have a rhetorical style, where the speaker tries to convince other MPs as well as the public. Such debates are among the few sources where politicians justify their actions.

The problem of selection bias involves selection of "extreme cases", which "leads the analyst to focus on cases that, in predictable ways, produce biased estimates of causal effects" (Collier and Mahoney 1996: 59). A relationship, established with a few cases, may disappear when a more representative sample is studied (Geddes 1990: 140). If I establish proof that international advice and "pressure" have been an important reason behind reforms in my country sample of Norway and Germany, but "forget" to consider that ideas cannot explain reforms alone, since not all countries receiving such advice conduct reforms, my study could suffer from this weakness (Geddes 1990: 140). There is therefore a danger of overestimating the importance of explanations found in case studies (Collier and Mahoney 1996: 87). However, as this study does not intend to give a full answer of why reforms happened but rather what role ideas from IOs played in this process, this objection is not considered crucial. Still, it should be noted that my findings contribute more to theory building than theory testing. As noted by Crompton, comparative case study research reveals similarities and variation that can result in new theories (2001: 173). And, as my country sample includes one non-member state of the EU, I have included a country where the EU is not supposed to have any direct effect. I have thus introduced a case

that could strengthen the assumption of influence of ideas, if even a non-member takes EU advice into consideration (Haverland 2006: 135, 140).[64]

This discussion shows that both a high degree of concordance between international advice and national policy, as well as explicit references saying that the former inspired the latter, must be carefully investigated, before one can conclude there is either strong or limited foreign influence. As argued above, one way of reducing the danger of confirmation bias, over- or underrating of influence, is to rely on several techniques of interpretation. As such, an increased use of methods' triangulation, broadly defined as the use of more than one method to support an argument, is to be recommended. In my study this is achieved by document analysis, parliamentary debates, conducting interviews with people with different perspectives (researchers and field experts, politicians representing different political parties, bureaucrats), and, admittedly to a very limited degree, analysis of material from archives. Still, the question of rhetoric is not solved; are actors really inspired and influenced by cross-national ideas, or do we witness instrumental and strategic use of external arguments? As Atkinson and Coffey argue (2004: 68), one should not take interview transcripts or documents at face value, and one should always remember that documents are written for a purpose. Asking who the authors are and why did they write what they write or say what they say, is important.[65] Radaelli speaks of a pitfall he calls ”the benevolent view of learning” (2007: 7); since policy makers prefer to be seen as promoters of (positive) change, they might overstate the importance of learning and understate the importance of competition, coercion and/or conflict.

Sometimes it would be useful to gain access to earlier versions of policy documents, like bills or reform plans, to examine whether and why changes were introduced and to try to identify controversial issues. My interviews have been used to identify possible channels of influence; reviews, meetings, conferences, or reports,

[64] However, making yet another reservation, in my approach a non-member cannot serve as a control case dismissing alternative explanations for reforms since, as described earlier, the EU influences family policy mainly through *non-binding* advice, and not regulatory or financial means applying exclusively to Member States.

[65] The material interest of the writer must always be considered when analyzing documents, especially policy documents. As Scott reminds us, actors may have political interests in presenting one and not other views, thus “The researcher must always ask what individual or collective interest may have been felt by the authors of the documents which he or she studies” (1990: 23). I refer readers further interested in such issues, and criteria for assessing the quality of documentary sources, to Scott (1990) or Lincoln and Guba (1985).

originating in IOs, study trips abroad, influential research communities, and so on. I have then tried to gain access to written sources from such events (preparatory documents, minutes), and/or spoken to new persons. This means that, to a certain limited extent, I have conducted archive research, but this has been done by getting seminar talks, speeches, policy documents, and discussion papers directly from my informants. Compared to a full, traditional archive search, my approach is vulnerable to the recollection of the interviewees. On the other hand, this approach has the advantage that only the material the participants, i.e. my informants, consider important, is analyzed.

Still, as I argue in chapter 3, it is more or less impossible to find the original source of an idea. A comment made by a German civil servant emphasizes this problem of identifying ”who is the initial mover”:

> "We have different working units and in these working units there are experts who read a lot, when they developed the Elterngeld for example. Where something flowed in I am unable to tell in detail, because that must the individual expert tell. However, regarding the Elterngeld reform it is quite obvious that we consulted the Scandinavian countries and had a close look at their models, and also tried, as far as possible, to check whether they had already evaluated it" (German interview 3, authors translation).

And, as noted by Andresen and Grønlie; “(…) impulses might go in both directions, or, even more realistically, they come from several sources, and the object of transfer might itself be transformed in the process: negotiated and re-interpreted” (2007: 15).

Moreover, tracing the origin of an idea is not necessarily the only interesting research task. What I take an interest in is what kind of contact there has been between countries and organizations in a phase where new policies were developed. Having conducted interviews with politicians as well as experts in Germany, Norway and the two organizations in question, I feel confident that I have a fairly good overview of contacts. I therefore argue that it is sufficient to study information conveyed in

interviews in more detail, even though archives research could have enriched the analysis.[66]

In summary, a research design, seeking to answer questions of ideational influence and learning, would ideally involve more detailed process tracing than I can offer. George and Bennett (2005: 210) distinguish between four varieties of this method, and my approach may be most similar to the more general version, where the causal process is not traced in detail. I have not interviews with that many policy actors, nor have I had (or tried to get) access to archives where policy documents are found in different stages of the process, and I have also not participated in meetings and conferences that have been part of the peer review processes. Instead I have relied on publicly available documents, parliamentary debates and interviews with a number of key actors, such as politicians, independent experts, and civil servants, as well as secondary literature. Moreover, I have concentrated on two countries in order to be able to devote sufficient time to consult the data required for investigating my assumptions on the role of cross border ideas, and to untangle the processes under scrutiny (Levy 1994: 309, 310, Campbell 1998: 382, Orenstein 2006: 21). This means that I can make no generalizations, but my analysis still has the potential to contribute to theoretical progress (Radaelli 2000: 38). I am also aware that in conducting research in this way I am not capable of shedding light on all aspects of possible learning. Still, I am able to identify several processes that can involve learning and actors who are active in these processes. I can also look at the time dimension and compare policies before and after. Furthermore, I can illuminate how countries interact and cooperate. This can be done by investigating the data sources presented below.

[66] Another way of extending the data material would be to participate in meetings and conferences which are part of the peer review processes. Marcussen´s OECD-study partly relies on this approach (2002: 121). This kind of observation would, however, be very difficult, especially since my analysis is focussing on at least some reforms which took place many years ago. The trend of holding EU family policy conferences might be one forum where I, as a researcher, could be allowed to sit in and observe. The EU and OECD peer review processes are not open and as such are not possible to observe directly. Here one has to rely on interviews with other participants.

4.5 Presentation of data sources

I analyze *parliamentary debates*, *policy documents*, such as EU and OECD reports, national *White Papers* and *reports by commissions and working groups*, and *interview transcripts*. *Newspaper articles*, e.g. press interviews of key policy-makers, and accounts found in *academic literature*, where this is available, complete the analysis of this primary material.

4.5.1 Policy documents

4.5.1.1 Documents of international organizations

For reasons of simplicity and space, I concentrate on the main advice and views disseminated by the EU and OECD within the two major areas for reconciliation of work and family life; infrastructure and parental leave arrangements. EU-documents studied encompass commissioned studies, peer review minutes, documents from relevant OMC-processes on social inclusion and employment like the *European Council Recommendations on the EES* (European Employment Strategy), and the Employment Guidelines. EU *Council and Commission Joint Reports on social inclusion* will be studied, as they also express views on family policies. Proceedings from conferences on family policies are also included. The reports, studies, and recommendations from the OECD that I examine, comprise *Economic Surveys, Employment Outlook*, the *Babies and Bosses* series, the *Starting Strong* reports from the *Thematic Review on Early Childhood Education and Care* (ECEC), and working papers and other documents made available at the OECD web page on *Families and Children*. Common for all sources is that they contain ideas about what ought to be done, and are not part of legislation connected with any sanctions.

4.5.1.2 German Policy documents

In the German case, I will analyze the *Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz* (law on the extension of day care) from 2005, the *Elterngeld* reform (parental leave) from 2007, and briefly the *KiföG* reform (law on further extension of day care) from 2008. In Germany, explanation of a law is included as part of the draft law, providing a useful source (Büchs 2006: 66). Background reports for OECD studies such as *Starting*

Strong, NAPs (National Action Plans), and NRPs (National Reform Programmes) are also important. Party programmes of political parties could inform us on changes in actors´ previous preferences, as well as the interests of their electorate. Press releases, speeches, and publications from the family ministry are also consulted to a limited extent. The same goes for the Family Report of the Ministry (*Familienbericht*), prepared every second election period, and similar reports commissioned by the ministry. I translate non-English quotes into English and provide an appendix (5.3) of quotations in the original German.

To illustrate what kind of indicators or criteria I search for in the documents, I provide an example from a press release from family minister von der Leyen:

> "All parties have in principle taken a positive attitude towards the aim of family minister Ursula von der Leyen of preparing another 500 000 childcare places for children less than three years old within 2013. Consequently, the European standard on childcare is met, the minister emphasized in connection with the decision of the Bundestag" (BMFSFJ 2007, my translation).

4.5.1.3 Norwegian policy documents

Reports to the Storting (the Norwegian parliament), the bills on the cash-for-care reform (*kontantstøtteloven*) and the decisions to increase childcare coverage, the publication series of the Ministry of Trade and Industry on the *Lisbon-strategy seen from a Norwegian perspective*, and background reports for OECD studies such as *Starting Strong*, are among the Norwegian policy documents I study. I also look at some press releases and information available at the government's websites, speeches, and party programmes and government declarations. I translate non-English quotes into English and provide an appendix (5.4) of quotations in the original Norwegian.

4.5.2 Parliamentary debates

4.5.2.1 German parliamentary debates

On the webpage of the Parliament (www.bundestag.de), under *Documents* (*Dokumente*), one finds the *Subject and Speakers´ Indexes* (*Sach- und Sprechregister DIP,* http://dip.bundestag.de). DIP means Documentation and Information System for Parliamentary Materials (*Dokumentations- und Informationssystem für Parlamentarische Vorgänge*). This database, available only in German, is common for

the *Bundestag* and *Bundesrat*, containing plenary debates, acts, motions, interpellations, and reports. This allows a researcher to follow the process of deliberation on a parliamentary item through its various stages, for instance to see who is proposing a new law and how they justify it.[67]

I have entered the terms "Kifög" (bill on the promotion of children), "Elterngeld" (parental leave benefit), and "Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz" (Daycare Expansion Act), to identify relevant debate material. For a closer explanation of how parliamentary proceedings were identified, and a complete list of documents analyzed, see appendix 4. Quotations in the original German language are found in appendix 5.1.

4.5.2.2 Norwegian parliamentary debates

The website www.stortinget.no allows search for publications from the parliament (Storting) and government at the same time (*Søk i publikasjoner fra storting og regjering*). The search includes all proceedings of the Storting (parliamentary records, *Stortingsforhandlinger*), among them the following publications: Minutes of plenary proceedings (*Stortingstidende*), Report to the Storting (*Stortingsmelding*, White Paper), Norwegian Official Report (*NOU*), Consultations (*høring*), proposition to the Storting (*Stortingsproposisjon*), bill (*Odelstingsproposisjon*), and recommendation to the Storting (*instilling til Stortinget*). The documents are only available in Norwegian.[68]

I have entered the terms "kontantstøtte" (cash-for-care benefit), and "barnehage" (childcare). From the results page, I have chosen all documents I consider to be relevant. For a complete list of documents analyzed, and information on the selection of material, see appendix 4. As for the German case, quotations in the original Norwegian language are found in an appendix (5.2).[69]

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[67] The passage of new laws is described in detail at the homepage of the Bundestag (see links via *Parliament*, then *Function and role* and *Adoption of legislation*).

[68] The website of the Storting presents English translations of its documents and publications (see Glossary). Cf. http://www.regjeringen.no/en/doc.html?id=439279 for a similar overview for the government.

[69] For a brief overview of decision-making in the Norwegian parliamentary, multiparty system, see for instance the web pages of the Storting or Berven (2005: 94-96).

4.5.3 Interviews

The data stems from 30 semi-structured expert interviews made with representatives of the EU (February 2007), the OECD (March 2007), Germany (April-May 2007), and Norway (October-December 2007).[70] Sometimes two informants were interviewed together, so that the number of interviewees is higher than 30. The interviewees were policy makers, experts, bureaucrats, representatives of interest organizations, and stakeholders, involved in the formulation of ideas or debates surrounding family policy and other social policy reforms from both a national and international perspective. In addition, I have had conversations with academics in both Germany and Norway. Being able to speak with people actually involved in the events is of great value and preferred to second-hand information. However, as Mason (2002: 60) argues, effective generation of data from interviews may be contingent on previous document analysis. Thus, I consulted some of the documentary sources when preparing the interviews.

Many interviews (19) were conducted in cooperation with colleagues working on a common research project (the project is described in appendix 1).[71] We searched official web pages and policy documents to identify the interviewees. All interviews were done after first having sent out an informative email asking for permission to conduct an interview (see appendix 2 for example of request). Most people said yes, but German representatives in international organizations consistently refused to let themselves be interviewed and referred us instead to national ministries. Some interviewees asked to have a list of questions sent in advance.

The interviews were conducted in Norwegian, English, or German (cf. appendix 3), and lasted from 30 minutes to 1, 5 hours at the longest, depending both on how much relevant information the interviewees had and how much time they could spare. The interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the respondents, and most of them transcribed in detail. Transcription has been carried out as accurately as possible, but in a few instances repetitions or unfinished sentences have been left out. In this way the transcribing is also part of the analysis (Kvale 1996: 160).

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[70] Some actors were re-interviewed later.

[71] The total number of interviews conducted within the project is higher than 30. I only refer to the interviews I use.

Questions were asked face to face, but a few interviews were done by telephone, when a personal meeting was impossible to organize (5 out of 30). As well as other questions, we asked respondents about their knowledge of international initiatives within family policy, questions about how the respondents perceived the influence of international actors, and whether they had relied on foreign experiences in their policy development. All interviews started with a short presentation of the project and ended with giving the respondent the possibility to raise issues he or she thought should be mentioned, or to ask questions about the project (see appendix 3 for the list of questions). As many interviewees preferred to be anonymous, I provide no list of interviews.[72] In order to preserve the anonymity of interviewees, citations and information are referred to by interview codes. Each reference includes the country or organization the interviewee is affiliated to as well as a number, e.g. *Norwegian interview 5* or *OECD interview 1*. As with the parliamentary debates, quotes are translated into English when the interviews were conducted in Norwegian or German. I have strived for word for word translation, but to make the text readable. A few times interviewees have read quotes I use and asked for minor language/style-changes.

4.5.4 Newspaper articles

Daily, and weekly, quality press coverage supplements the primary sources. Contemporary press accounts are helpful for a number of reasons. For instance, as journalists tend to have access to top-level politicians, press interviews of key policy-makers may complement my interview data, which does not include people currently in charge of a ministry. Moreover, newspapers make it possible to see whether politicians use international experiences as a way of justifying their actions to the broader public, which again indicates the status such experiences have. Newspaper reports also intimate whether criticism from international organizations, on national family policy, is known and part of the national agenda. One example of this could be taken from an article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), one of Germany's

[72] Such a list exists within the project group, but will not be added as an appendix due to the above referred anonymity wish. Cf. appendix 3 for further comments.

most influential daily newspapers, in connection with the OECD´s presentation of the *Babies and Bosses* series in Berlin:

> "The OECD welcomed measures such as the Elterngeld introduced in January 2007 and the planned extension of childcare facilities. However, cash benefits like the cash-for-care benefit, due in 2013, were criticized. The effects are often ´disastrous`. It disposes of work incentives" (FAZ 2007a, my translation).

Newspapers also illuminate how national governments consider their family policy in comparison with other countries. For instance, Arni Hole, Director General in the Ministry of Children and Equality, says that the policies of the Ministry have become an important export article of Norway: "In fact, the success of private companies is now in many ways related to good family policy. Therefore we have become an export article on the same level as oil, gas and tourism, says Arni Hole" (Aftenposten 13.10.2007).

Media commentary is also useful in interpreting the reasons for shifts in the programmes of political parties. In Germany, especially the Christian Democrats seem to have changed their traditional view on family policies and adopted many of the ideas promoted by IOs. Newspapers may shed light on whether this is due to such recommendations or rather the result of more interest-based reasoning, like the preferences of voters.

I translate non-English quotes into English, and as for the quotations from parliamentary debates, I provide an appendix of quotations in the original German (5.5) and Norwegian (5.6).

4.5.5 Secondary literature

From academic literature I have examined the views and interpretations of other researchers on the role of cross border ideas. The reforms investigated, partly with the exception of the last German reforms on Elterngeld and childcare, have been analyzed by many scholars, thus making it possible to consult these contributions. However, as

pointed out in the introductory chapter, there are few if any studies of ideational influence of IOs in family policy reforms.

4.5.6 Summary data sources

According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), a mix of different methods is advisable to get a broad overview of factors influencing an outcome. Usually, mixed-methods designs are understood as those combining quantitative and qualitative methods (Greene et al. 1989: 256), but Hantrais argues that methodological pluralism could also imply the use of different methods within qualitative research (2005: 404). In the following chapters this will be done by combining interviews, documentary studies and parliamentary debates, to supplement each other and cross-check data. As a matter of fact, one could even risk having access to too much data. As Kuhnle (2007: 93) argues, historical studies of the flow of ideas perhaps had a "research advantage", in the sense that the number of sources was more limited at the time social security was introduced, due to the existence of fewer international actors and meeting-places and travel and communication possibilities.

4.6 Conclusion

Evans and Davies claim that the existing literature does not provide us with the techniques we need to demonstrate policy transfer, and they suggest a checklist of factors for this purpose (1999: 381). Building on this, as well as on contributions by Karvonen (1981), Dolowitz and Marsh (1996, 2000), Stone (1999), Dolowitz (2000a-b-c), Radaelli (2007), and Seeleib-Kaiser and Fleckenstein (2007), I developed my own approach in the first section of this chapter. First, I will check for correspondence between the EU/OECD policy and national reforms. Then, if they are in concordance with the view of IOs, I discuss whether the EU and/or OECD played a role in pushing these reforms forward.

Moreover, this chapter introduced a framework developed by Campbell, useful when analyzing international ideas. Another section discussed different

methodological issues and challenges I encounter when relying on this approach. Among these are understating or overstating the effect of cross border ideas, uploading, credit-claiming, blame-avoidance, selection or confirmation bias, and how to separate the influence of different actors when more than one is promoting a certain policy. Although these challenges make my approach a demanding undertaking, I have argued in the chapter's last section that relying on comprehensive data material in the form of policy documents, parliamentary debates, and expert interviews, help me diminish the difficulties of interpretation. With the available means I can analyze whether cross border ideas are important for reforms.

Overall, the conclusion reached in this chapter is that the possible effect of family policy ideas of international actors may be investigated empirically. Its contribution has been to point out how we can go about checking whether ideas from international organizations have had a demonstrable impact upon German and Norwegian reforms. The analysis in chapters 7 and 8 will demonstrate the usefulness of such an approach. A first step will be to present the ideas of IOs in the two consecutive chapters.

Chapter 5 The EU as a family policy actor[73]

> "Underlying European Commission documents on social policy is the assumption that, as a result of common demographic trends, particularly population ageing, family and household change, all member states in the European Union (EU) are facing similar problems, for which they might be expected to adopt similar solutions through a process of policy learning and diffusion" (Hantrais 2004a: 193).

This chapter describes the role the EU can play in the processes of policy learning and diffusion that Hantrais refers to in the above quote. I concentrate on the general family policy advice of the EU and leave the presentation of country specific advice, when it exists, to chapters 7 (Germany) and 8 (Norway). Thus, I shall also use countries other than my two cases to illustrate the EU approach to family policy, and I draw on several social policy fields to illustrate the EU working mode. Section 5.1 elaborates on EU processes for development and dissemination of advice, while section 5.2 describes what kind of advice is issued, and organizes these ideas in the framework developed by Campbell (1998, 2002), which was presented in the previous chapter.

The chapter first argues that although the treaties do not provide for competence in the field of family policy, the EU´s view of social policy as economically favourable (a productive factor, cf. Jacobsson 2004: 360), has resulted in a new interest in family issues, where some recommendations[74] and targets have been developed. Even though these policies are embryonic they have the potential to influence domestic reforms in Member States, making it reasonable to study whether the EU exercises some kind of reform pressure. Paraphrasing Mosher and Trubek (2003: 83), this chapter asks whether the EU provides domestic political actors in favour of family policy reform with arguments for the necessity of change, and evidence that other countries have reformed successfully. Second, the chapter argues that the Union is addressing family policy in a new way, by applying an approach

[73] This chapter draws heavily on a working paper on EU family policy (Lindén 2007b), available at http://www.rokkan.uib.no/publications/?/notat

[74] The term *recommendation* is only directly found in the field of employment (and the Stability and Growth Pact) where the Council has issued recommendations based on the proposals of the Commission since 1999. However, the OECD also uses the term and I use *view*, *advice*, *suggestion*, *opinion, or policy idea* throughout the analysis. In order not to confuse the reader, I specify when *recommendation* refers explicitly to the EES.

similar to the Open Method of Coordination (OMC)[75], which increases its potential influence in member countries. Two further issues make the topic important: it is interesting to examine what kind of policy ideas the EU promotes, and the new way of addressing family policy, through conferences and the *European Alliance for Families*, contributes to the debate on how the EU is developing as an institution, e.g. how it might be gradually increasing its competence in a new field. This last point sets a focus on whether a policy has to be formalized to have influence, or to be a policy at all. I consider the potential influence of advice, proposals and recommendations regarding national family issues, from unbinding policy-making processes, just as important to study as direct regulation. Policy is found in the whole spectre, from court rulings to superficial rhetoric. It is important to stress, though, that the EU has no family policy which provides services in cash or kind, but is only disseminating ideas about national family policies. Throughout this chapter, the term family policy is used in this latter meaning of policy ideas.

Describing an embryonic policy, not constituting an explicit policy, is difficult. My solution has been to search for an emerging family policy within other fields of social policy. This is a demanding task, since it is not clear which areas and which documents within each area one should include. Nonetheless, I identify several policy ideas at the EU level which would be classified as family policy at the national level, e.g. concerning the provision of childcare and parental leave.

5.1 Development and dissemination of ideas

According to to Hantrais and Letablier, the Commission has adopted a "cautious approach" in the area of family affairs (1996: 1). Unlike the website of the OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs (DELSA), the Commission website, listing the policy areas of the corresponding EU body; the Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (DG EMPL),[76] does not include family policies. The fact that the EU “department” working on social policy does not

[75] This process, however, is not referred to as an OMC process.
[76] http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/index_en.html, retrieved 19.06.2008

provide a link on this theme is indicative of the status family policy has in the EU; it is not addressed directly as a field of social policy, but rather as part of other fields. Instead, for one example, the DG EMPL – website says the following on demography and the social situation in the EU:

> "The monitoring of demographic trends focuses on the drivers of change, ageing of the population and trends in fertility rates and the potential for meeting the challenges posed by changes in these parameters. Special efforts are made to monitor developments pertaining to the well being of families including the reconciliation of work and family life" (my emphasis).[77]

It is under the broad heading of "reconciliation of work and family life" that the EU has developed several policies that affect family affairs. These policies can be found both as directives and as non-binding policy advice. The empirical basis for the present study consists mostly of official EU documents, such as recommendations, action programmes, White and Green Papers, guidelines, National Action Plans (NAPs), National Reform Programmes (NRPs), and Joint Reports and Communications, as well as of conference proceedings. Conferences are an often-overlooked part of social policy development and coordination.

While the OECD has a social policy unit responsible for issuing family policy reports that can be scrutinized in terms of process and content, this is much more complicated for the EU, which lacks this important characteristic. This section thus cannot discuss the development of a specific family policy report. Instead I discuss the Open Method of Coordination, which is the mode of governance applied in the area of employment and social protection, where we find some of the traces of an EU family policy stance. I go on by discussing a new trend which makes the EU apply an OMC-similar approach to family policy, namely in the extended use of family policy conferences, and a recent German Council Presidency initiative for EU-wide exchange

[77] http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/demo_and_social_situation_en.htm , retrieved 19.06.2008. One of the five key areas that must be addressed is to promote "demographic renewal in Europe through better conditions for families and reconciliation". What the EU is doing within family policy related fields is perhaps best gathered and depicted by the DG EMPL – website's quick guide to EU employment and social policies (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_model/index_en.html, retrieved 19.06.2008. See also http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/gender_mainstreaming/familylife/family_life_reconciliation_en.html, retrieved 30.6.2008).

of family policy ideas, called the *European Alliance for Families*. But, first, I discuss an instrument the EU has which the OECD does not have; family policies binding Member States in the form of directives.

5.1.1 Directives

While much social policy at the level of the EU is in the form of voluntary policy advice, there exist quite a lot of hard laws as well, even for family policy. Directives, together with regulations and decisions,[78] are legally binding for Member States. According to Falkner et al., there were 72 binding social policy acts up till 2003 (2005: 52). In the same period there were 87 non-binding acts (recommendations, resolutions, conclusions, declarations, and communications). The authors conclude that binding and non-binding decisions have developed more or less in parallel and that it does not appear that soft measures take over from hard measures, despite the new trend associated with the OMC (2005: 54).

The two directives most relevant for my family policy study, are the directive on pregnant workers (1992), and the directive on parental leave (1996), the contents of which are described in section 5.2. The directive on pregnant workers was passed by majority voting in 1992, and made possible by the Single European Act from 1987, which allowed directives to be based on qualified majority, rather than unanimity (Falkner et al. 2005: 43). The directive on parental leave had been proposed already in 1983, but the Member States could not reach agreement. In the negotiations, some of the original characteristics of the parental leave, e.g. the non-transferability of leave from men to women, or the other way around,[79] were taken out, but it was still not possible to agree upon. The directive was finally introduced as a framework directive in 1996 (Lohnkamp-Himmighofen and Dienel 2000: 51, 55, Falkner et al. 2005: 142).

[78] For an explanation of the different instruments available to the EU, see glossary.

[79] Some authors write that the leave according to the directive is non-transferable (Hantrais 2000: 17, Lohnkamp-Himmighofen and Dienel 2000: 56, Kaufmann 2002: 476) and other authors claim that this is not correct (Falkner et al. 2005). This confusion might result from the fact that directives have both binding and non-binding elements. Falkner et al. (2005: 140) present the different parts of the directive in a very clear way: it has seven compulsory minimum standards, among them the individual right to leave for both men and women, and nine non-binding soft law provisions, among them the recommendation that parental leave should not be transferable.

A framework agreement means that workers' and employers' representatives, i.e. the social partners, reach an agreement that is later given legal force by the EU.

Since I deal with non-binding policy advice, or family policy ideas, I do not focus on directives. Readers interested in this topic are referred to Falkner et al. (2005), who conclude that even though the two directives mentioned here in many respects provide minimum standards, they brought about some improvements in most member countries.[80]

5.1.2 OMC[81]

For almost a decade, the EU has addressed social policy through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). As explained by Radaelli (2003: 43), "The idea is to use the European Union as a policy transfer platform rather than a law-making system". Pestieau defines the OMC as the "process whereby common goals are laid down and progress is measured against jointly agreed indicators, while best practice is identified and compared" (2006: 162). This new mode of governance was adopted as part of the Lisbon strategy, which links economy, employment, and social policy, and is supposed to "launch policy-learning processes by 'naming and shaming' bad-performing governments and by exchanging examples of best practice" (Nauerz 2004: 1). It is meant to provide Member States with the necessary knowledge to reform their social protection schemes, and puts emphasis on learning (de la Porte, Pochet and Room 2001: 292). The OMC has, as described in the Lisbon Council presidency conclusions (Council of the European Union 2000b: 12), four main characteristics;

> "1. fixing guidelines for the Union combined with specific timetables for achieving the goals which they set in the short, medium and long terms;

[80] Cf. also Linos (2007). The directives are comprised by the EEA – agreement and as such apply also for Norway (Dølvik and Ødegård 2004). Although directives are binding, they may also stem from former non-binding ideas transferred to the EU system by individual Member States.

[81] As there is no real OMC for family policy I do not go into all the details of this mode of governance. The EU center at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, hosts an online OMC bibliography very useful for researchers interested in this topic; http://eucenter.wisc.edu/OMC/index.htm. From the rich literature on the area, I refer the reader to de la Porte et al. (2001), de la Porte and Pochet (2002), Ferrerra et al. (2002), Radaelli (2004), Trubek and Trubek (2005a-b), Zeitlin et al. (2005) and Citi and Rhodes (2007). Heidenreich and Bischoff (2008) give an up to date overview of the characteristics of the different OMCs.

> 2. establishing, where appropriate, quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks against the best in the world and tailored to the needs of different Member States and sectors as a means of comparing best practice;
> 3. translating these European guidelines into national and regional policies by setting specific targets and adopting measures, taking into account national and regional differences;
> 4. periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review organised as mutual learning processes".

How can learning take place and lead to change by influencing policy-making? In chapter 3, I discussed how ideas matter for social policy, but here I only briefly discuss this with reference to the OMC-approach.[82] Voluntary procedures, such as the OMC, bring together national representatives and identify promising policies, best practice, goals, and indicators for such goals, as well as a loose review of Member States´ progress over time. The OMC may also intensify bilateral contacts and facilitate exchange of policies, between what Hantrais (2004a) refers to as lesson exporting and lesson importing countries. The OMC process-generated reports, conferences and formulation of policy ideas, as they are used by the EU, and similarly by the OECD, in developing social policy, are policy instruments which could be studied to see whether learning can account for domestic welfare reforms. This would allow us to study the role of ideas in a specific development and circumstance (Rueschemeyer 2006: 249). Learning presupposes dialogue, and dialogues must be traceable (e.g. preparatory documents or governmental documents) if learning shall be ascribed a convincing effect. Thus, an analysis of the effects of learning processes should study documents related to such processes (chapters 7 and 8).

Zeitlin (2005a) discusses four different mechanisms within the OMC that can shed light on how and why learning happens.[83] *Peer pressure* through naming and shaming is one. This mechanism presupposes national sensitivity to policy advice, domestic visibility and media coverage. Table 5.1 is taken from a recent communication (EU Commission 2007), and illustrates possible EU pressure through

[82] See Borrás and Jacobsson (2004) for a rather positive discussion of mechanisms and Keller (2000) for a more critical account.
[83] For another instructive overview of how the OMC may bring about change, see Trubek and Trubek (2005a) or Büchs (2006).

Table 5.1: Example of possible EU peer pressure in the form of ranking

Provision of childcare in European countries in 2005

Children cared for (by formal arrangements other than by the family) up to 30 hours / 30 hours or more per usual week as a proportion of all children of same age group

Country		0 – 2 years		3 years – mandatory school age		Mandatory school age – 12 years		Admission age to mandatory school (pre-primary included)
		1 – 29h.	*30h. or +*	*1 – 29h.*	*30h. or +*	*1 – 29h.*	*30h. or +*	
EU Member States								
Belgium	BE	23%	19%	49%	48%	43%	54%	6
Bulgaria	BG	.	.	.	.	.	.	7
Czech Republic	CZ	2%	0%	30%	40%	53%	45%	6
Denmark	DK	13%	60%	15%	79%	34%	65%	7
Germany	DE	8%	8%	61%	26%	69%	29%	6
Estonia	EE	3%	9%	9%	69%	57%	40%	7
Ireland	IE	14%	6%	64%	14%	64%	35%	6
Greece	EL	3%	4%	27%	34%	54%	45%	6
Spain	ES	25%	14%	54%	40%	53%	46%	6
France	FR	16%	16%	56%	39%	48%	52%	6
Italy	IT	9%	16%	21%	70%	13%	87%	6
Cyprus	CY	7%	12%	42%	43%	54%	46%	6
Latvia	LV	2%	16%	6%	60%	27%	69%	5
Lithuania	LT	2%	9%	11%	46%	66%	31%	7
Luxembourg	LU	14%	8%	51%	12%	74%	23%	4
Hungary	HU	2%	5%	30%	49%	30%	70%	5
Malta	MT	5%	0%	32%	23%	19%	79%	5
Netherlands	NL	36%	4%	82%	7%	89%	11%	5
Austria	AT	4%	0%	53%	16%	66%	32%	6
Poland	PL	0%	2%	8%	22%	58%	38%	6
Portugal	PT	3%	26%	9%	55%	30%	69%	6
Romania	RO	.	.	.	.	.	.	7
Slovenia	SI	2%	22%	10%	67%	41%	55%	6
Slovakia	SK	0%	3%	10%	57%	39%	44%	6
Finland	FI	8%	19%	25%	51%	82%	18%	7
Sweden	SE	22%	31%	35%	52%	1%	95%	7
United Kingdom	UK	24%	6%	72%	28%	10%	90%	5
EFTA countries								
Iceland	IS	7%	30%	21%	76%	22%	77%	6
Norway	NO	11%	22%	28%	52%	83%	17%	6

Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC 2005 data.
Notes:
1) Formal arrangements refer to the EU-SILC survey reply categories 1-4 (pre-school or equivalent, compulsory education, centre-based services outside school hours, a collective crèche or another day-care centre, including family day-care organised/controlled by a public or private structure).
2) Only care for more than 1 hour a week is considered.
3) Some children do not use child care since parent is taking parental leave for a younger child.
4) Child age is calculated at the interview date, except for IE and FI where age is calculated at 31/12/2004.
5) Some countries, like BE, did not collect data for children being 12 years at the interview date.
6) CY, LV, PT, SK: No information collected for children born between 31/12/2004 and the interview date.
7) FR: Care performed by 'assistantes maternelles' directly paid by the parents, without organised structure between them, is not included in the table.
8) IE: For the age groups '0 - 2 years' and '3 years - mandatory school age', the care '1-29h.' is overestimated and the care '30h. or +' underestimated due to measurement error.
9) SK: Measurement error for the age group 'mandatory school age school - 12 years' leading to high proportion of children without school hours.

Source: European Commission (2007): Promoting solidarity between the generations, p. 15. Eurostat has published similar statistics for a number of years. I illustrate the mechanism of peer pressure with reference to a recent table, which, of course, is too new to have an influence on the reforms I study in chapters 7 and 8.

naming and shaming, by comparing childcare provision in Europe, including EFTA countries like Norway. *Socialization and discursive diffusion* is a second mechanism, resulting in an incorporation of EU concepts in domestic debate. Still, "speaking the same language" does not rule out disagreement and differences in actual policies. The *leverage effect*, a third mechanism, emphasizes the strategic use of the OMC process

by national governments, "to advance their own domestic political agenda, promote desired reforms, and overcome entrenched veto positions" (Zeitlin 2005a: 480). The last mechanism mentioned by Zeitlin is *mutual learning*, and works through increased awareness and self-assessment. Although only this last mechanism refers explicitly to learning, they all deal with learning in some way. Zeitlin ends his discussion by saying that the mechanisms may be combined, and probably work together at the same time (2005a: 482). According to Dostal (2004: 440), both the EU and OECD provide "a controlled environment for the creation, development and dissemination of political discourse".[84]

The OMC is now applied to a number of different policy fields, e.g. employment (since 1997), social inclusion (since 2000), pensions and health care (since 2001). The OMC-process is different from field to field (Citi and Rhodes 2007). For instance, the OMC inclusion, which has been merged with social protection (pensions and health), is a biannual process in which Member States prepare National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (NSR, until 2006 National Action Plans; NAPs) as responses to EU set common objectives. The OMC employment is an annual process where National Reform Programs (until 2005 National Action Plans), which are national policy reports on progress, are compared with employment guidelines, set by the EU. Within this OMC, the European Council issues country specific recommendations.

A few comments on the development of recommendations are relevant. First, as the term suggests, neglecting them has no legal consequence or sanctions, except for the possible "naming and shaming" affect it can produce. Second, recommendations are made in close collaboration with the country in question. The Council recommendations are based on proposals from the Commission. Recommendations are objects of discussion, and negotiations take place before a recommendation is issued (Büchs and Friedrich 2005: 254, Schäfer 2006: 80, Heidenreich and Bischoff 2008: 511). In other words, the final recommendation is not pure "EU expert advice", but rather the result of cooperation and negotiation with national officials. According to

[84] See tables in appendix 6 exemplifying how countries could learn about how their systems of social protection influence employment patterns compared to other welfare states.

Zeitlin (2005a: 478), Germany has been particularly active in this respect. Interviews with stakeholders in the EU confirm that recommendations are developed this way, and this should be kept in mind when investigating "EU influence" on national social policy.[85]

The same very much applies to directives (Stratigaki 2004: 47), and the setting of goals in the first place. The Barcelona targets for what level of childcare provision Member States should offer, is something the Member States have agreed upon. To use an expression from one of my interviewees, such goals may be employed strategically as a sort of "ping-pong game"; "I push something forward in the EU, which I cannot get through at home, then I refer to the EU and say; "there is a decision there"" (German interview 4).

The national "answer" to such recommendations, as seen from the perspective of the EU, should, first of all, come in the form of concrete policy initiatives, e.g. by conducting a reform, and, second, through comments in the National Reform Programmes. However, just like the recommendations themselves, these reports must also be interpreted with caution. Umbach stresses that the NAP is no "policy driving document", and described policies are not developed especially for the OMC-process (2004: 122). In order to present themselves as complying with international advice, Member States might present themselves as following EU recommendations, when in fact the newly introduced policies are the result of national processes and debates (Büchs and Friedrich 2005: 262).

The next step in the OMC process on employment is an evaluation by the EU through joint employment reports, which are the employment chapter of the EU annual progress reports. This may result in new recommendations.

One example illustrates the different steps. Since 2001, Germany has been advised to increase its provision of childcare places. The German NRPs from 2006 and 2007 describe plans for how to meet this recommendation. The latest joint

[85] I am not the first to question the objectivity of EU advice in the OMC. Citi and Rhodes (2007: 6) put emphasis on how the OMC is a two-way, reciprocal relationship, rather than a one-way process and refer to a number of studies stressing this (Börzel 2003, Zeitlin 2005c, Trubek and Trubek 2005b, Heidenrich and Bischof forthcoming 2006 [actually published in 2008]). Similarly, but less commented upon in the scholarly literature, OECD studies on social policy are largely based on consensus and direct funding from countries examined in the reports. This suggests that only countries interested in advice are actually reviewed. I elaborate on this in chapter 6.

employment report also discusses childcare, but this report does not have separate chapters for separate countries.[86] Instead, more overall conclusions are made:

> "The issue of reconciliation between work and private life is gaining some impetus in Member States, mostly through the commitment to improve the provision of childcare facilities (AT, DE, EL, LU, NL, PT, UK). However, many Member States are far from reaching the childcare targets and most do not even refer to them in their national strategies" (2008: 9).

As may be expected from this Joint report, which identifies Germany (DE) among the countries actually improving the provision, this country is no longer recommended to take the same actions to provide more childcare places. Instead the new country specific recommendations for 2008 praise Germany for having responded to the need for action;

> "Among the strengths shown by the 2007 German Implementation Report are: the consolidation of public finances; the strengthening of high-class research and innovation; the progress in tackling youth unemployment; and the determined approach to increasing childcare facilities" (European Commission 2007e: 13).

This example nicely captures the way the process is working, but it might give an overstated impression of the impact of the OMC. Although it seems like Germany has done exactly what the EU is recommending, this does not mean that the EU recommendation is the reason why reforms take place (cf. chapter 4 on methodology). Moreover, it may very well be, that Germany considered it useful to be given precisely this recommendation on increasing availability of childcare facilities. A statement from a high level EU official suggests that Germany has used its membership in this way (EU interview 1). He describes Germany as a member which used to be "inward looking", not very keen on contributing to comparisons of Germany and other countries´ achievements, and reluctant to participate in special reviews (cf. also Duncan 2002: 308). Today this has changed radically:

[86] However, part two of the Communication from the Commission to the Spring European Council 2008 gives an assessment of the National Reform Programmes, country by country (EU Commission 2008d).

> "It happens very frequently that (…) different Member States, facing a particular national challenge about changing a mind set, as in Germany on family and demographic issues, rely on the European framework for facilitating that mind change. So, to supporting their point in the national, internal debate with the argument that look, it is not just a matter for us, it is an overall recognised important matter by all our partners in the EU" (high level commission bureaucrat, EU Interview 1).

Interviewed policy makers in the EU and OECD emphasize how Germany has used this arena to get a debate going at home, what Zeitlin refers to as a leverage effect. The influence exerted on Germany is then described more as a reinforcement of national initiatives, implying that the role of international organizations in this field is better depicted as a mediator function.

Another part of the OMC-process is the peer review.[87] This is a mutual learning process, where selected policies and good practice are evaluated and is similar to the peer review of the OECD (Schäfer 2006). There are different kinds of peer reviews; a) committee peer review (thematic peer review seminars), taking place in the Employment Committee (EMCO), the Economic Policy Committee (EPC), and the Social Protection Committee (SPC), where all Member States participate and discuss NRPs, and b) the peer review programme, focussed on a specific topic, taking place in one member country and where participation is voluntary (Jacobsson 2004). The aim for both is to initiate learning and enhance transferability. I will now elaborate on the second kind of peer review.

One Member State is organising the review. This country either presents a national policy thought to be a best practice, or invites countries to give advice on which policies the host should implement to meet a goal. One example of an interesting peer review, which had a family policy topic, is instructive. In 2004, Germany participated in an EU peer review process in Stockholm, on the topic of parental leave and childcare, as part of the OMC on employment.[88] Nine countries discussed the host's system, as well as the transferability of Swedish experiences and

[87] More on peer reviews here: http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.net/ (social inclusion) and http://www.mutual-learning-employment.net/ (EES).
[88] Information available at http://www.mutual-learning-employment.net/peerreviews/2004/04/19-20. Family policy related issues are the topic of peer reviews in other OMCs as well. For instance, Germany is organising one on assisting women to return to work after having children as part of OMC/inclusion in November 2008.

policies to the participating countries. Independent experts wrote reports on each country where the possibility and the potential benefits of adopting the Swedish model were discussed. For Germany the conclusion was clear: "Given the different institutional arrangements, a pure copy of the Swedish experience is not possible, but major elements could be integrated in a new German policy" (Maier 2004: 6). This kind of meeting and information exchange is an example of how the EU might play a role in disseminating ideas.[89]

Just as participation in OECD social studies is voluntary, no Member State has to take part in EU topical peer reviews (German interview 4). Likewise, the host decides the topic and choice of best practice (Zeitlin 2005a: 489). Motives for signing up may vary. Countries may want to learn and benefit from best practices in other countries (EU interview 7), or to provide best practice to others (EU interview 3). This means that countries may participate when it suits them, which, again, tells us that the potential naming and shaming effect coming from peer reviews would be limited. However, being part of an OMC process designed to identify best practice could also mean that countries are exposed to new policy ideas, and start looking for solutions before problems exist, contrary to claims of the idea-literature, discussed in chapter 3, stating that dissatisfaction or underperformance lead to a search for new policies. This contributes to the literature on when ideas succeed.[90] How influential such peer reviews are is difficult to say, but it may at least "broaden your view", as one interviewee, present in Stockholm in 2004, put it (EU interview 7). However, empirical studies cast doubt on whether peer reviews have resulted in policy transfer (Jacobsson 2004: 363).

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[89] Obviously, when studying the possible influence of international family policy ideas, it would be interesting to interview people involved in this particular peer review as a small "case study". The reader would expect this to be discussed in subsequent chapters and this has been my aim, but it has proved very difficult. I have tried to get in contact with both the Swedes organising the review, and the German participants, but for various reasons I have not been able to get to talk to all of them. I managed to identify the right Swedish official, who unfortunately turned down my interview request. EU officials refused to give me the name of the German one due to concerns of anonymity. Instead they offered to ask the national officials directly and then to inform me if the persons agreed, but they could not reach them. I also asked the German Ministry, but was still unable to reach the German official participant. I have, however, talked to two other participants, one independent expert and one national representative. Consequently, this particular peer review, which is so interesting since it proves contact between Germany and Sweden within EU learning processes on family policies, very similar to recent German reforms, will not be discussed in depth in chapter 7 on possible German learning through IOs.

[90] According to López-Santana (2006: 491), EU-influence can occur through the definition of domestic problems and/or identification of good and bad policies even for countries with relative good results.

Some comments on the actors involved in the OMC process are also useful in this discussion.[91] The three Committees mentioned above are important within the OMC: the SPC, EPC and EMCO, which have strong relations with each other (Zeitlin 2005a). The committees are positioned between the Council and the Commission (Borrás and Jacobsson 2004, Jacobsson and Vifell 2007). They prepare proceedings and provide advice to the Council and Commission. They contribute in the formulation of reports, indicators, and guidelines. An interviewee with the SPC describes the function of the Committee like this:

> "In practice the committee has become the fore-room, the venue, where member states agree with the Commission what will be decided by the Council. This means that, usually unless there are mistakes or problems in the process, the opinion of the committee becomes the Council conclusions. It's a way to discuss and reach agreements, (…)" (EU interview 5).

The committees have two delegates from each Member State, and the Commission. The Social Protection Committee has an Indicators' Sub-Group supporting the Committee in its work. It is relevant to know about these committees, since they are described in the literature as having different priorities, some being more socially oriented (SPC), and others more economically oriented (EPC) (Pochet 2005, Ervik forthcoming 2009), and that policy learning may take place in these committees (Nedergaard 2007). The economically oriented players are usually, like in the OECD, considered stronger than the socially oriented ones. However, the interviewed member of the SPC says their work is characterised by a consensus approach, implying that they come up with a wording all participants can accept (EU interview 3).[92]

Within OMC-processes, the Council and Commission, as well as the committees, are most important while the European Parliament (EP) and the European Court of Justice are more or less excluded (Borrás and Jacobsson 2004: 200, de la Porte and Pochet 2005: 359, 372). The same could be said about national parliaments (Zeitlin 2005a: 460).[93] However, regarding the development of reconciliation policies

[91] For a discussion of actors involved in the OMC - process, see de la Porte and Pochet (2005).
[92] For more details and a discussion related to pensions, cf. Ervik (forthcoming 2009).
[93] For a discussion of democratic challenges connected to the OMC, as well as possible solutions, see Büchs (forthcoming 2009).

more generally, a similar point can be made about socially versus economically oriented actors. The EU Commission has been much more positive towards taking family policy issues than the Council and individual countries: “The Commission has had to try to find a balance between the contradictory demands of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, and its margins for manoeuvre have, therefore, frequently been constrained” (Stratigaki 2000: 32, cf. also Hantrais and Letablier 1996: 124, 140, Duncan 2002: 310, Collins and Salais 2004: 421). And, as Hantrais and Letablier note, the European Parliament has obviously tried to make the EU Commission engage in a more comprehensive family policy for a long time, but their resolutions are purely advisory (1996: 140, Dienel 2004: 295, 2002: 260, 265, Gerlach 2004: 301, Hantrais 2007: 104). One well-known report in this respect is the Hermange report from 1999 (European Parliament 1999), but it has had limited success. Another example is the Bastos report (European Parliament 2004).[94]

5.1.3 Conferences: family policy moving higher on the agenda

Hantrais stresses how family policy is mainly a national policy field and that ”No formal process has been initiated under the OMC to set targets for family policy” (2004a: 206). However, the recent trend of countries holding the EU Presidency to organize conferences on family policy issues, and the *European Alliance for Families* discussed in the next section, both being instruments to spread national experiences, partly qualifies Hantrais´ argument, in the sense that family policy ideas are also disseminated at the EU level through OMC-like processes.

”Families, Change and Social Policy in Europe”, hosted by the Irish EU-Presidency in 2004, was the first EU Presidency conference on this theme. Perhaps unsurprisingly at a conference like this, but still noteworthy, many of the participants emphasize how the Union has a say in this policy area. Linda Hantrais, whose work on EU family policy has stressed the modest development so far, participated, and said

[94] A more recent example is the report adopted by the EP in February 2008, asking the Commission to work towards an entitlement to paternal leave within EU parental leave law (European Parliament 2008). Note that there are also some nongovernmental organizations trying to make family policy an EU - priority, e.g. the Institute for Family Policies or COFACE (Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union).

that some agreement exists among Member States with regard to EU initiatives, to, for instance, create a better work-life balance, even though it is not reflected in common legislation (2004b: 113).

At the same conference, Marieluise Beck, the Parliamentary State Secretary Minister of the German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, refers explicitly to the Lisbon strategy, saying that "The Lisbon agenda have given us the specific task of promoting the family unit" (2004: 203) and calls for greater cooperation within the field, although her speech makes all the common reservations:

> "Europe cannot afford not to talk about such important themes on a regular basis. Please, do not misunderstand me: I am not thinking about shifting responsibility. Europe does not need any authorities for making policies on family affairs. But we do need a forum, in which we can discuss our European problems in the area of family affairs. At one stage, a working group comprised of government officials from the department of family affairs met regularly with the European Commission in Brussels to discuss current problems. We should set up this working group again!" (Beck 2004: 207).

Germany organized a similar conference in 2004, and while taking over the EU Presidency in 2007, it took the initiative to establish an *Alliance for families*, to enhance the exchange of best practice. This has similarities with what Beck referred to above, and has been welcomed by the EU Commission (see section 5.1.4).

Austria held the EU presidency in the first half of 2006 and organized a conference entitled "Demographic Challenge - Families need Partnerships".[95] There are few references to a possible common EU family policy at this event. Most participants, spanning from ministers and commissioners, to experts and representatives of interest organizations, focus on themes like the role of enterprises, changes in family structures, and family in the economy and the community, as well as reconciliation of work and family life. There is a strong focus on the role of the family in the demographic development, and less on the well-being of families,

[95] There exists no report from this conference, but information is made available at http://www.eu2006.bmsg.gv.at/cms/eu2006EN/liste.html?channel=CH0602. Unfortunately, these are mainly abstracts or shorter summaries in English, German or French, allowing no thorough analysis. By way of correspondence with the Austrian Ministry for Social Affairs I have gained access to some of the presentations, but the information is still very incomprehensive. This also makes it difficult to make references in a normal way, meaning that I have to refer only to participants´ names or page numbers as they occur when printing out the documents.

though this is touched upon in the official invitation to the conference. The conference is part of a comprehensive initiative to bring family related issues higher up on the agenda:

> "With this conference the Austrian Presidency wishes to continue the started initiative (Dublin, Berlin) and to make a contribution to this important and necessary discussion at European level. Results from this conference should flow into the new European Lisbon process. (…) We have gathered here to exchange experience and best practice for the reconciliation of family and profession. We can learn a lot from each other, without renouncing our national strengths. The diversity of Europe is also expressed by varied approaches and focal points in the domain of family policy. (…) A common target unites us: Family policy requires the further overlapping co-operation of all social fields" (Haubner 2006).

Thus, these three conferences could be seen as the start of a process whereby the Union takes more responsibility for an, until recently, neglected area. From the statements of different actors, this seems likely, but in which form this will take place is a different question.

Hugh Frazer of the DG EMPL provides support for a more modest ambition: "From my point of view I felt that most of the issues could well be addressed by developing the processes that we already have" (2004: 230). And, at the same time, some developments might go in an opposite direction. The European Observatory on the Social Situation, Demography and Family, established by the European Commission in 1989 in order to monitor and report about developments in the EU Member States, was closed down in 2004 (see Hantrais 2007: 120). According to Dienel (2004: 293), it dealt with exchange of information and never became very important. It has been replaced by The European Observatory on Demography and the Social Situation, taking family out of its name. On the one hand, this could be read as a sign of how family issues are subordinate to more pressing economic interests. On the other hand, the EU today is addressing family issues within the area of demography.

However, the conference trend continued and the Finnish EU Presidency organized an informal ministerial meeting in July 2006, to follow up Austria's work on family policy. The conference's concluding remarks in relation to the social and health policies, focus twice on reconciliation of work and family life, but less directly on

family policy measures. Again, family policy seems to be dealt with more as part of other fields, e.g. gender equality and non-discrimination, instead of directly as a distinct field. Issues like care by men and parental leave for both parents are promoted, as well as how women's participation rates are conducive to higher birth rates.

In this respect, the conference does not address family policy in the same straightforward way as in Berlin, Vienna, or especially as in Ireland. Family policy is treated as a productive factor, which, for instance, prolongs working careers. However, sharing of best practice within reconciliation of work and family life is stressed. The conference discussed topics like how family policy may promote higher female employment, and how high female employment is connected to higher birth rates, provided that childcare services are available. Also, but only in a draft background document (Finnish EU Presidency 2006), reconciliation policies are discussed more thoroughly. It is written by experts carrying no political responsibility, which might explain the much more direct advice and normative views included in the report, for example, how pension crediting for childcare periods must be improved, gender equality in caring work must be promoted, and more balanced sharing of responsibilities (increase men's housework and childcare hours).[96]

During the German Presidency in 2007, two important developments took place. First, the Germans organized an informal meeting where, for the first time in an EU setting, both family and equality ministers met simultaneously to discuss common challenges. As in the conferences described above, focus was very much set on learning, and according to the German family minister, the aim was to develop policy. Second, the Germans initiated the *European Alliance for families*, described in section 5.1.4, to enhance the exchange of best practice. The *Alliance for Families* could also be a permanent equivalent to the conferences.

The Portuguese Presidency, taking over from Germany, organized the conference "Reconciliation of Professional, Personal and Family Life: New Challenges for Social Partners and Public Policies", in July 2007, in Lisbon. Thematically, this seems like a continuation of the Presidencies before them, but this

[96] The attention devoted to family policy at the conference "EU's Evolving Social Policy and National Models" in Helsinki, in November 2006, could also be studied. A book on the Europeanization of social policy was published as background information for the conference (Saari 2006, published in 2007 as Kvist and Saari).

conference gathered fewer high-level politicians than some of the former ones, and the focus on the EU level seems also to have been less stressed. However, some of the workshops discussed issues with implications for the EU level, e.g. improving existing directives on paternity protection, extension of the Barcelona-childcare targets to include a qualitative aspect and not just a percentage goal, and a strengthening of reconciliation aims within the Lisbon strategy.

The Slovenian Presidency following Portugal, did not organize any special conferences on family policy. Among the next three countries to follow Slovenia; France, the Czech Republic, and Sweden, there are at least two countries which historically have been very interested in family policy, and thus it could be hypothesized that family policy will be high on the agenda. An interviewed high level EU bureaucrat within the DG EMPL, presents France as a country trying to make the EU engage more in family policy issues (EU interview 1, cf. also Hantrais 2000: 21).[97]

Should these conferences become annual events, with stronger exchange of information, monitoring, and negotiating, they could gradually ensure the EU some responsibility for family policy. A German high level bureaucrat confirms that this has been discussed with the EU Commission during their Presidency (German interview 3). According to Barroso, President of the European Commission; "It is not just by developing childcare facilities that we can turnround the decline in birthrates; we should also be drawing on national "best practices" in terms of parental leave, a flexible approach to working time, and social welfare arrangements" (Barroso 2005: 11). Judging from the six conferences organized so far, they could contribute to the building of networks and even epistemic communities, since the same organizations, institutions, and people, are represented again and again. Even official representatives from non-member countries attend these conferences, like the Norwegian Minister for Family Affairs, Laila Dåvøy, in Berlin, in 2004.

Overall, the conferences have drawn at least five interesting conclusions: family policy must be addressed in a more consistent manner, more child- and family-friendly policies are needed, action at the European level is required, exchange of best practice

[97] At the time of writing, France is still holding the Presidency and I have not been able to analyze their possible family policy related activities in detail. However, in September 2008 they organized an informal meeting of family ministers in Paris, inviting both EU and EFTA members to discuss reconciliation of work and family life.

is welcomed and European Demography Forum dealing, among other things, with family policy issues is to be set up. The issue of family policy is high on the agenda in the EU, but this does not mean that it will develop further into a continuous practice and take a more formal character.

5.1.4 The European Alliance for Families

The First Forum on Europe's Demographic Future, called for in the conferences, was organized in October 2006. Family policies are addressed directly through discussions of reconciliation of work and family life, and the need for modernizing family policies. In her opening speech, the German Family minister, von der Leyen, talks exclusively about family policy, and refers to measures that her country will implement as it takes over the EU presidency in 2007. She refers to a *European Alliance for Families*, which will be established to increase the exchange of information and family-friendly policies. The Alliance's working mode is described in a communication from 2007 (European Commission 2007c). Stressing the importance of the exchange of experiences, von der Leyen says the new German parental leave scheme is a direct result of Scandinavian best practice (2006: 5). Commissioner Špidla, in his opening speech at the same forum, says the EU should organize a Forum like this every two years, and encourages the exchange of good practice through regular meetings of government experts.[98] Špidla also says that the Union will set up an expert group for family issues, with representatives from each country (2006: 3). This underscores how family policy through different conferences attracts more and more attention.

The *European Alliance for Families* has many similarities with an OMC; the focus is set on the exchange of best practice, learning and unbinding policy advice. The background is described as follows;

> "The Alliance hopes to create impulses for more family-friendly policies through exchanges of ideas and experience in the various Member States and to foster cooperation and fruitful

[98] The second European Demography Forum took place on 24-25 November 2008. Family policy and sharing of best practice was central at this event, but information was made available too late to be included in my analysis.

> learning from each other in the European Union. By achieving these objectives, the European Alliance for Families can make a substantial contribution towards implementing the Lisbon strategy for economic growth and employment, for sustainable population development, for stronger social cohesion and for the implementation of the road map for gender equality".99

A German high level bureaucrat, who worked on the Alliance during the German Presidency, describes the background and aims like this:

> "The background is that it is difficult to treat family policy at the European level and it must be done through the backdoor; through the topic of demographic change, labour market or equal opportunities. If not, one cannot include family policy questions because there is no competence for family policy. And the idea was that we now use the EU Presidency to make the European Alliance for Families a platform for the exchange of opinions and information. More than that is it not. It is not about changes in competence, there will be no European family policy. We always speak about a European Alliance for *families*, the use of plural is deliberate, and similarly we speak about *family policies* to stress that different options exist and that we still can learn from each other. It is sort of a benchmark, the idea of benchmarking lies behind this. We simply want to stimulate exchange of opinions and information and during our Presidency initiate and set up a web portal enabling such exchange. The portal does not need to be especially good, but a start, which the Commission can take over to improve and supervise. And this portal should improve the access to family policy topics which until now required tedious labour to collect. I am very careful here, because it is difficult to actually keep this up to date and to ensure that something happens, but we have tried to initiate debate on demography, birth rates and reconciliation to promote such issues. (...) we hope the Alliance gains ground and that it continues in the next years, that it will be kept" (German interview 3, my translation).

The website of the Alliance provides an overview of national family policy in all 27 member states, and studies on family policy issues. It is interesting to note how the OECD´s work on family policy is referred to, both their family database and their *Babies and Bosses* series. A seminar on mutual learning tools for more family-friendly policies and better childcare provision, organized in cooperation with the OECD, is

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[99] http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/families/european-alliance-for-families_en.html, retrieved 19.06.2008. The EU has gathered information on Member States´ family policies before, e.g. through the MISSOC which is partly the same as OECD family database (cf. chapter 6). Notice how the *European Alliance for Families* is placed under the policy area demography and the social situation in the EU and not as an area of its own.

also presented. Interestingly, the website explicitly uses the term family policy and states, for instance, that the aim of the seminar was to "present instruments for the exchange of information and experiences in the area of family policies, and to illustrate their potential by looking at the area of child care" (my emphasis). Moreover, the website identifies best practice. So far, only three examples are given. The Finnish home care allowance, which is similar to the Norwegian *kontantstøtte*, is one. The two other best practices presented are the UK *Early Excellence Centres*, offering high quality practice in integrated education and childcare for young children, and the German *Local Alliances for Families*, which are groups of local actors seeking to increase family friendliness in their region

The German Presidency from January to July 2007 set up the website. Since then, in line with my informant´s concerns, the website has hardly been updated, and it contains very little information. At the time of writing in November 2008, more than a year after the Germans passed on the baton to the next EU Presidency country, the website is "being updated and developed", as it says on the website. It is difficult to find any sign of how the initiative has resulted in particular measures or actual exchange of experiences, except for the mentioned seminar in cooperation with the OECD.

5.1.5 A future EU family policy?

What status do these conferences and the Alliance have, then? In an article on the OMC, Berghman and Kieke (2002) discuss three conferences, organized by the Belgian EU presidency in 2001. According to these authors, "The conferences appeared to represent an important example of the open method of co-ordination, setting the agenda, discussing the development of indicators, and deliberating on the need to expand the powers of the EU into the area of social policy" (2002: 3). Although there is no OMC on family policy in the EU, I find it useful to analyze the conferences, and the Alliance described above, in the light of this soft mode of governance, especially since conferences, at least in the view of Berghman and Kieke,

constitute core elements of the OMC. Such an analysis will hopefully shed light on how far the Union has actually gone in this field of social policy.

Several participants at the conferences emphasize how family policy is fully in the competence of the Member States, and there are no direct ambitions expressed to create an EU family policy. At the same time, however, it is stressed how family policy is of a cross-cutting nature, and how a more consistent policy with action at the EU level is needed. Reading reports from the conferences on family policy since 2004, leaves the impression that such conferences are based on much of the same logic as the OMC. In several statements, actors speak up for employing a similar method concerning family affairs. On the Berlin conference, the German family minister, Renate Schmidt, speaks up for a system of continuous exchange of experiences, so similar to an OMC on family policy that practically only the term OMC is lacking (2004b). Jérôme Vignon of the European Commission emphasizes how family life interacts with social inclusion and pensions, and that the EU can coordinate policies in the area by linking national policies, and see to it that knowledge, research, and practices, are exchanged (2004: 223).

As will become clear in section 5.2 on the initiatives of the EU on family policy related issues, demography and the issues mentioned by Vignon, are, in fact, areas where the EU promotes ideas about national family policy. In a way, the conferences represent a "truly open method of co-ordination" in having a more bottom-up approach, for instance by allowing participation from NGOs.

Overall, the conferences on family policy and demographic developments have similarities with an OMC-process: participants are exposed to new ideas and views upon aims, functions, and set up of social policy fields, and the conference reports contain many suggestions to develop a process of continuous exchange of information based on best practice. Also, as with other OMC social policy formulations, the ones on family policy are coined in economic language, to use a phrase borrowed from Barbier (2004: 7). This implies that the underlying reason for action is economic growth and sustainability.

However, there are also some clear distinctions. For instance, there is (as yet) no development of clear objectives or indicators, except perhaps number 18 and the

childcare-goal to be discussed in section 5.2, and key OMC-players, like representatives of Member States and the Commission, are not present to the same degree. Also, Member States have not agreed to make annual reports or start monitoring-processes of any kind. The main instrument to achieve the goals of the OMC is the development of processes of discussion and interaction between political and administrative actors at national and international level (Bisopoulos 2005: 151). So far the conferences have not resulted in processes like, for instance, family policy peer-reviews.[100] The not yet very developed *European Alliance for Families* may change this, but there are no certain signs of it.[101]

More research is needed to clarify the status and importance of these conferences and whether calls for EU action within family policy are non-committal statements or the start of binding cooperation. But with this recent development of new modes of addressing family policy, how come family policy at EU level is still only a cross cutting field? And why is there no OMC on family policy?

Scientists writing on this topic give various reasons why the European Union has not (yet) developed its own family policy. The obvious and straightforward answer is, in the words of Pfenning and Bahle, that "The EU´s principle of subsidiarity leaves social and family policy the responsibility of the member states" (2000: 128). But the interesting question is why the EU has not developed more competences within this area. Many of the obstacles applying to social policy in general also matter for a common EU family policy (cf. Leibfried 2005). A full treatment of this topic is not

[100] However, the peer review process in Stockholm on parental insurance and childcare as part of the EES was organized in 2004, and similar themes have been addressed in other peer reviews (section 5.1.2).

[101] Furthermore, an indication of the status and importance of the conferences I have referred to is how they are treated in scholarly articles discussing the contributions made by Presidency countries. The *Journal of Common Market Studies* provides a special issue called the *Annual Review of the European Union*. It has, for instance, had articles discussing the German (Maurer 2008), Finnish (Ojanen and Vuohula 2007), Austrian (Pollak and Riekmann 2007) and Irish (Rees 2005) Presidencies and the authors do not mention family policy and conferences at all. Surely, had the conferences and the Alliance been the start of a new policy field for the EU, the articles would have discussed this. Instead, the unaddressed issue is indicative of the conferences´ modest importance, at least for formal policy development. Another way of answering the question of the role Presidency conferences and the new Alliance for Families has played so far, and can play in the future, would be to interview those present at the conferences. For the not yet much developed Alliance this is difficult, though. I have interviewed some officials representing the EU and OECD at the conferences, as well as the German presidency, and they are not very positive. Workshop leaders at the conferences, often referred to as Chair or Rapporteur, include scholars who have written on social policy in general and/or family policy specifically, among them Joakim Palme, Linda Hantrais and Mary Daly.

possible here, but a brief summary of problematic issues, applying more specifically to the family policy area, based on previous research, is instructive.

There are strong ideological dividing lines in this area, both between and within countries (Hantrais 2007: 101). Moreover, family policies are, by many, considered private affairs and a non-suitable area for state intervention (2007: 101). And EU social protection focuses on workers´ rather than citizens´ rights (Lewis and Ostner 1995: 177, Hantrais 2007: 101). This leaves the Union little competence in this field. Hantrais sums up the argument like this: "Where policy objectives do not coincide with values which are widely shared across Member States, the Union is unlikely to be able to exert its influence or attempt to shape national policies" (1995: 75). I would agree that the different understanding of what a family policy should include complicates the development of its own coherent family policy, but does not stop the EU from trying to shape national policies. Instead, while always emphasizing how family policies are the exclusive responsibility of the Member States, "the Union can still contribute indirectly to their modernisation and success" (European Commission 2007c: 3). This is often justified by saying that e.g. childcare is instrumental in reaching equality between men and women or higher birth rates.

In the context of my study, the allegedly special character of family policy is interesting. I would like to take issue with two assertions found in the literature on family policy and the EU (e.g. Hantrais 2007: 101). First, the very different family structures across Europe supposedly make it difficult to find one family model which could serve as a model for a common family policy, and to coordinate national policy. Does this not make the Open Method of Coordination a natural choice? According to Kohl and Vahlpahl (2004: 12), the OMC is particularly suitable when political consensus is hard to find, path dependency and interconnectedness of social policies are strong, and the potential loss of legitimacy high. Soft law is used exactly in political sensitive areas (Büchs 2006: 41).

Second, is family policy really so special, with regards to moral questions and conflicts of interest involved? This is possible to question. Other areas are also difficult, but have still been addressed. Social inclusion, pensions, health, and employment, are all important in national budgets and for traditional ideas of social

justice (Kohl and Vahlpahl 2004: 12). And, as stressed by Radaelli (2004), learning is always a political exercise, irrespective of policy field. Should not the OMC be especially suitable for family policy, then? Family policy is much politicized, but has few vested interest or institutions linked to it. It is popular with the public, but not as important, in terms of spending, as are pensions or health policies.

One could argue that agreeing on full employment as a goal is less controversial than, for example, whether families or public institutions provide the best surroundings for the care of small children.[102] Still, family policy seems possible to deal with in a more systematic way than has been done up until now. The latest developments of conferences on family policy, as well as the increasing understanding of the field as important for economy and competition, suggest that this is not totally unlikely. Similar focus in other organizations, such as the OECD, could also provide reciprocal action, conducive to further coordination at EU level. At the same time, the recent streamlining process of creating one single OMC on social protection could mean that there will be no individual OMC on this issue, but rather increasing incorporation into the established OMCs, or coordination through initiatives such as the *European Alliance for Families*. This has been suggested in interviews with EU officials (EU interviews 1).

5. 2 EU advice within the family policy field

I move forward by looking at the content of the family policy ideas found at the EU level. As Daly (2000) argues, other fields of social policy are important for family policy, and I thus search the four fields where there is an ongoing OMC-process; employment, social inclusion, health, and pensions. I also look at equality (gender) and demography, as two less "typical" social policy fields that still have substantial implications for family policy. The analysis is thus restricted to six areas, but one could probably also find relevant family related policies within other fields. Analyzing documents within this area enables me to see different fields in connection with each other, perhaps revealing an embryonic family policy otherwise hidden. I present the

[102] For more controversial questions and potential conflicts on family issues, see Hantrais (2007: 116).

more general family policy advice coming from the EU, with reference to Campbell's framework which was presented in chapter 4.

There is barely any European Union social policy,[103] and, according to Kari, family policy is left more or less untouched by the EU, so Member States have developed their own instead (1998: 29, see also Hantrais 2007: 108 or Hantrais and Letablier 1996: 143). Based on Abrahamson et al., and their description of the UK family policy, or lack thereof, (2005: 209), one could summarize like this: the EU has no family policy in the sense of a coherent set of objectives for government activity in this policy area, but several policies that affect the situation of families. In other words, there is no family policy, but a strong family political commitment. There is no commissioner or Directorate-General ("department") for family affairs (the closest one being the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities). When employing a broad approach though, an evaluation will show that the EU has developed a few family policy stands, and addressed family affairs more indirectly through other policies (Hantrais 2004a: 96). As will be recalled, I use a definition of family policy which focuses on families with children, and I thus look for policies affecting this group.

5.2.1 Parental Leave

A directive on parental leave was adopted in 1996.[104] It guarantees three months leave, and according to Falkner et al. (2005: 145), all EU members had to adapt their legislation to some extent. This is a clear instance of EU family policy, but it has its limitations; the directive does not say that the leave must be paid.

Also, there is one important directive with family policy implications in the area of health: the pregnant workers directive (1992). This directive resulted in

[103] Kowalsky's study of European Social Policy constitutes an alternative view with its very broad definition of European Social Policy: regulative and redistributive measures, as well as relevant effects of other common policies like the Monetary Union and even agriculture, are included (1999: 16). In his opinion, the EU does have some supranational redistributive policies through the Social Fund, although he admits that the funding is insufficient and that it only supplements, and not replaces, national policies (1999: 315). Also, several authors, e.g. Leibfried (2005), acknowledge that the EU plays an important indirect role in delimiting what kind of policies states can choose, but they still consider the overall EU social policy initiatives weak.

[104] For an overview of EU legislation on parental leave, see: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/gender_equality/legislation/pregnant_en.html

improvements in all countries, except Denmark, though some of the changes were small, and has been particularly important for maternity leave, as it guarantees a minimum of 14 weeks paid leave (Falkner et al. 2005: 78, 91).[105] These two directives directly influence the daily life of EU citizens, but they are only minimum measures.[106]

Parental leave schemes are not only addressed by the EU through directives. The main argument of this chapter, saying that the EU´s view of social policy as a productive factor has resulted in a new interest in family issues, where some recommendations and targets have been developed, is mainly based on the second kind of policy; the non-binding. These can, above all, be found in the OMC-processes where there is a strong focus on employability and sustainability of welfare arrangements. There are several suggestions for the design of such schemes, suggestions which show that the EU expresses views which go beyond simple minimum standards, something which is exemplified by the 2003 joint Commission - Council report on adequate and sustainable pensions. The report identifies expansion of care facilities for children and other dependants, and measures that improve the reconciliation of work and family life as a way of securing welfare systems. Also, people should gain pension credits for periods of childcare, or care for elderly relatives (2003: 88). However, the report is critical towards measures which keep women out of work for longer periods:

> "A number of countries with less developed nursery childcare facilities offer fairly generous support to women who take extended career breaks to care for their children in their first two to three years. Naturally, such policies may primarily reflect priorities in family policy. Yet, with a view to the impact on employment rates and the difficulties for many women of returning to the labour market after a long absence, the question arises whether it would not be better to use these resources to invest in a expansion of childcare services to speed up the return of women after parental leave" (2003: 45).

[105] An EU Commission proposal from October 2008 seeks to create longer and better maternity leave by revising this directive (EU Commission 2008a). The minimum period should be extended by four weeks, with a minimum pay at the level of sick-pay, but preferably with 100 percent of previous salary. The proposal is sent to the EP and national governments for discussion and agreement is expected to be reached during 2009. At the same time, the Commission has said that it intends to improve paternity leave. All this illustrates how the EU is increasingly taking actions within the area of family policy. It shows how the relevance of reconciliation policies to demographic challenges, female employment, social exclusion, and poverty, is recognised and uncontested at EU level. A revised directive will be applicable also to EFTA countries like Norway.

[106] See Falkner et al. (2005) for details.

People (women) who do not work, because of their family or personal responsibilities, are identified as one reason for lower employment rates than are wanted. Therefore, shorter leave periods and increased availability of social services could relieve these persons and increase employment rates, which, at the same time improve the sustainability of pension systems. While family obligations and lack of care services are identified among the hindrances to a higher employment rate (SPC 2004: 4-5), there are no concrete suggestions for mending this. Instead the strategy seems to be to refer to Member States that have developed successful policies in this area, for instance the Swedish parental leave system and its father's quota, and thus indirectly give direction (e.g. European Commission 2006b). Still, one understands that parental leave schemes associated with a Scandinavian type, where the leave is well paid but with incentives to return to work after a year's time is preferred, being a programmatic idea in Campbell's framework.

An expert-report ordered and financed by the European Commission (Plantenga and Remery 2005), goes further. In this commissioned report it is recommended that the design of the leave arrangements be reconsidered, especially in countries where men barely make use of leave facilities. This refers to the duration of the leave, eligibility, payment level, and flexibility (2005: 9). Here the Swedish father's quota is for instance presented as a good way of making men take more responsibility (programmatic idea).

Another possible source of influence in the form of commissioned work is the report *A new Welfare Architecture for Europe*, a report ordered by the Belgian EU Presidency in 2001, and written by Esping-Andersen and other experts. They incorporated much of this report in *Why we need a New Welfare State* (2002). The family is given a central role in this book. Esping-Andersen speaks about the importance of institutional, public support (affordable childcare, paid maternity and parental leave, and provision for work absence when children are ill) (2002: 94). Increasing female participation rates are considered important, since it seems to affect birth rates positively, reduces the difficulties of financing the welfare state, constitutes

an (often highly educated and skilled) untapped productive factor, and is favourable to social inclusion and avoiding poverty.[107]

Also within health, parental leave is described as an important means to assuring reconciliation of work and family life, and promoting equality and in the Green Paper on demographic change (European Commission 2005b), families and family policies are treated very explicitly, and given great importance in confronting the challenge of ageing societies (frame in Campbell's framework): "The low fertility rate is the result of obstacles to private choices: late access to employment, job instability, expensive housing and lack of incentives (family benefits, parental leave, child care, equal pay)" (European Commission 2005b: 5). The Communication on the demographic future of Europe from 2006, expresses similar views (EU Commission 2006c). According to several high level bureaucrats in the EU (EU interviews 1, 5), there was a turn during the Hampton Court European Council under the UK presidency in the second half of 2005;

> "(…) where the European Council urged the Commission to be more active in the field of demography, not in promoting family policies, of course not, but in promoting a debate and raising awareness on the consequences of population decline and the need to create a more family-friendly climate at the level of member states. (…) So we are engaged now, as Commission, in a much more systematic approach to encouraging exchange of good practices, on how to create a more friendly context for family life, but avoiding to say that an aim of that is exclusively promoting fertility. One indirect aim of course is better conditions for fertility" (EU interview 1).

The interviewee refers to a more systematic role, but it is still more of a policy guidance role and Member States are not so keen on institutionalizing these new initiatives. Instead of developing a specific process for families, it could become part of the responsibility of an already established committee, e.g. the SPC (EU interview 1).

The communication from 2007 on promoting solidarity between the generations, deals with family policy in a direct and coherent way, not so common for

[107] The EU also fund transnational research projects on reconciliation of professional and private life and publish summaries of this research (Collins and Salais 2004: 446, see e.g. European Commission 2007d).

the EU. Although it is emphasized at least three times in the first six-seven pages that "family policies are the exclusive responsibility of the Member States" (European Commission 2007c: 3), it is also said clearly that the EU may have a role in serving as a platform for policy exchange. This is the same document as the one describing the *European Alliance for Families*, discussed in section 5.1.4.

However, it is still obvious that family policies serve the overarching aim of economic growth instead of constituting an important policy field as such (cf. Dienel 2004, Ostner 2000). This is revealed already in the first paragraphs of the Green Paper on demographic change (European Commission 2005b), where it says that families must be supported by public policies, in order to reverse the demographic decline. This reversion is crucial to avoid that the ageing results in reduced growth. In the same manner, incentives like family benefits, parental leave, and childcare, are emphasized as possible solutions to the low fertility rate with the clear overall aim of keeping people at work (2005b: 5). Reconciling work and family life is justified with regard to the demographic crisis, not to individual wants or interests of children (EU interview 5). Similar signs of the paradigmatic idea that family policy is a productive factor, meaning that well designed social and family policies may contribute to economic growth, are found in the 2008 J*oint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion*. Its first key message is the following; "Social and economic policies can and should be mutually supportive" (2008: 2). The same report from the year before refers to this as a win-win strategy (2007: 9). An important part of the background for the needed reforms, or frames, to use the vocabulary of Campbell, is population ageing and increases in life expectancy. Pension systems, healthcare, and social inclusion policies must be adapted to this challenge, and getting more people into paid work, made possible, among other things, by improved access to childcare, is an important measure in this respect (2007: 5).

Ostner (2000) and Lewis (2006b) state that work/family policies used to be part of equal opportunities policies, and have now become part of employment (the EES). I agree, and this will be made clear in the next section on childcare, but I would argue that we have recently seen a trend where family policies are treated under the heading of demography. Irrespective of where the family policy issues are discussed, Lewis

and Ostner (1995) made an important comment, relevant for whether, and how, the Union will and can address family policy issues. Policies must pass two ”needle-eyes” to reach the agenda and become adopted: at the supranational level, policies must be addressed as employment-related, and at the national level, policies must be acceptable for the national welfare regimes and gender order. They claim that since EU law applies to workers, ”Only the family concerns of continuously employed wage earners attract political attention” (1995: 160). The idea of family policy as a possible solution to the ageing society, makes the EU not only focus on workers, but they are still the main subject for emerging family policy issues, like parental leave and childcare.

5.2.2 Childcare

Creating more kindergartens is the most direct and specific family policy aim of the EU. This is one of the objectives set in the framework of the EES, referred to as the Barcelona targets:

> “Member States should remove disincentives to female labour force participation and strive, taking into account the demand for childcare facilities and in line with national patterns of provision, to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of Age” (Council of the European Union 2002b: 13).

This is an example of a concrete aim, originating from the Lisbon strategy, which, for instance, (western states of) Germany needs to work hard to comply with. To say, therefore, that there is no OMC on family policy (Hantrais 2004a: 206) is not completely accurate, as the EES includes a very strong focus on reconciliation of work and family life (see also Kvist and Saari 2007: 10-11).[108] Reviewing documents on the EES, one finds references to many of the same family-affairs related issues that turn up within other fields of social protection. In Guideline Number 18 (*Promote a lifecycle approach to work*), a better reconciliation of work and private life, and the

[108] In October 2008 the EU Commission proposed a package of measures to improve work-life balance in the EU. Improved maternity leave (see section 5.2.1) and better childcare are two important parts of this package.

provision of accessible and affordable childcare facilities and care for other dependents, is emphasized. The indicators developed to monitor the measures of the Member States include the employment impact of parenthood, provision of care facilities for children, and provision of care facilities for other dependents (ill, disabled, elderly relatives).[109] The focus is on how such issues restrict higher employment rates. Measures of reconciling work and family life to increase the overall employment rate, as adopted in the Lisbon strategy, could be interpreted as a sign of EU influence on the family policy, since in practice, it promotes female employment, and thus stronger parental leave schemes and childcare institutions, as logical next steps (programmatic ideas). Increasing care facilities for children and other dependents is part of strategies within employment, social inclusion, health, and gender equality. Care for other dependents is also legitimized by avoiding the withdrawal of people (women) from the labour market, to fulfil care responsibilities. Several of these EU publications include tables, or other forms of comparisons and rankings, e.g.: "…, research shows that childcare provision for the under-threes varies from 8% in Germany, 2% in the Czech Republic to 36% in the Netherlands and 22% in Sweden" (European Commission 2007a). Some countries do better than others and the same publication stresses the need for mutual learning:

> "It is clear that countries that favour family-friendly policies in areas such as equal access to employment, parental leave for men and women, equal pay, generally have higher birth rates and more women in work. They are also some of the best performing countries in terms of jobs and growth. The differences in the way countries manage support for families underlines the potential for mutual learning" (European Commission 2007a, see also tables in appendix 6).

A recent report monitors the implementation of the Barcelona targets in the EU (EFTA countries like Norway are not covered) (EU Commission 2008c). Germany is said to surpass the objective for children aged 3 and older, but only reach an intermediate level of coverage for those under three (2008c: 6). Improving the quality of childcare

[109] List of indicators available at http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/employment_strategy/docindic_en.htm

facilities (staff numbers and qualifications), and ensuring affordability of childcare are also important.

A similar emphasis on family-friendly policies, and particularly childcare, is found in the Commission's 2006 *Annual Progress Report on Growth and Jobs*. The report is very concrete in its criticism, as exemplified by the comment on Germany's NRP and the need for "a more concrete and operational plan to achieve the intended increase in childcare facilities" (European Commission 2006a: 5). These recommendations, and the NRPs, should be studied closer when evaluating the effect of the OMC on national social policy (chapter 7).

That the family policy advice of the EU has the potential of influencing domestic reforms, is illustrated well in the EES recommendations, which are individually tailored and often reiterate a policy problem within a particular country. In the 2004 Council recommendation on the implementation of Member States' employment policies, the UK is urged to: "improve the access to and affordability of childcare and care for other dependants (Council of the European Union 2004: 12).

In the *European Alliance for Families*, good practice is identified. Clearly not very comprehensive yet, it presents the Finnish home care allowance, which is similar to the Norwegian *kontantstøtte*, as one good practice or programmatic idea. This is partly contradicting what the EU is saying in other documents, since a home care allowance is generally thought to delay the return of women to work. This is the reason why the OECD is so critical toward it (OECD 2007c). Countries like Finland and Norway combine high childcare coverage rates with a home care allowance, but there is no doubt that these two policy instruments have partly contradicting aims. As such, the conflicting goals between the general EU advice, and the best practice offered by the new Alliance, could indicate that the latter is more of a measure listed by a Member State, interested in introducing exactly this instrument, and less of a common EU advice. I return to this in chapter 7.

The European Commission Childcare Network**,** an expert group set up by the EU Commission, and coordinated by Peter Moss, studied reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities in the period 1986-1996. Its members were experts from all EU member countries and the network produced a number of

publications proposing increased provision of childcare (European Commission Childcare Network 1990, 1993, 1994, 1996a-b, see also Phillips and Moss 1989). I will not discuss these publications in detail, but they emphasize how childcare has been of interest to the EU for several decades.

Summing up, the EU has no direct powers in the field of childcare, but the EU Commission monitors progress towards the Barcelona targets, provides comparable statistics, makes recommendations, and promotes the exchange of best practice. The focus on childcare is an important programmatic idea for the EU. We may be seeing the first modest results of the increased interest in community action on childcare in the last two decades, described by Ross (2001) or Kaufmann (2002). At the same time one should not forget that several policy failures exist. A proposed directive on childcare provision supported by the Childcare Network, dealing with both level and quality, was not adopted, and the recommendation coming in its place in 1992, is not binding (Duncan 2002: 308, Mahon 2002: 362).

5.2.3 Child Poverty Prevention

Prevention of child poverty is a third family policy issue which is high on the EU agenda and reconciling work and family life is an important idea in the European Social Inclusion Strategy. To eliminate child poverty is one of the seven key policy priorities in promoting social inclusion (European Commission 2005a). As stated in the 2004 Joint Report on social inclusion, all NAPs acknowledge the importance for families of managing the balance between work and family life (2004: 36). Among the measures that could be useful to achieve this are programmatic ideas such as extension of childcare facilities, provision of financial support for families with young children, flexible or part-time working arrangement and a review of parental leave and maternity schemes (2004: 46, 53). The joint report does not get more specific than this with regard to measures. The 2008 Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion emphasizes the importance of paid work and how reconciliation policies can contribute:

> "If children are poor, it is generally because they live in poor households. Improving the material situation of children involves increasing family income through measures to facilitate the access of both parents to the labour market as well as through direct support – either financial or in form of provision of basic social services. Reconciliation between work and family life can play a major role, for instance through enhancing the quality and quantity of child care and long-term care provision" (2008: 7).

Judging from the joint reports, it seems like the Member States have developed several measures targeted at families within the frame of social inclusion. While there are few, or none, such targeted measures among the objectives and indicators of the OMC, the Member States are convinced that the family constitutes a key role in the fight against social exclusion. This is in line with the aim of the OMC; agreeing on goals, but leaving the states to decide how to reach them. However, another interpretation is possible; it could be that Member States refer to measures developed in completely other settings to prove action towards social exclusion. Such an interpretation paints a less positive picture of the influence of the EU regarding family policy.[110] At least it is interesting to see how initiatives targeted at the family are explained by reference to EU policies.

5.2.4 Sharing of caring responsibilities

A fourth, admittedly less distinct, family policy issue, or programmatic idea, covered by the Union, is the focus on sharing family responsibilities. This means that men, encouraged by the provision of financial incentives, should take more responsibility, for their children and house work (Špidla 2007). As observed by Daly regarding individual European welfare states (2004: 138), it seems also that the Union considers it legitimate to recommend a certain type of policy (European Commission 2006b: 8). As has been shown in the paragraphs on parental leave, the Union wants to increase gender equality, and suggests that men should become more involved in caring. The division of labour by gender in a household, used to be a matter left to the couple

[110] Since development of family policy is still in its very beginning, it might be illustrative of how Member States make their already established policies the subject of future objectives, meaning that the arrow of influence goes from member states to the EU and not the other way around.

(Ostner and Lewis 1995: 178), but today the EU is clear on its advice that both parents should care for their children. Still, according to Lewis (2006b: 429, cf. also Stratigaki 2004), this focus was even stronger before the EU started to enhance gender equality, mainly through the advice of increased female employment. Labour market participation may be a conflicting goal to gender equality if the question of unpaid work is ignored (Lewis 2006a: 390, see also Rubery 2005: 401). A second stage consultation of European social partners on reconciliation of professional, private and family life, is currently (2008) being discussed, dealing with possible EU measures in this field (European Commission 2007b).[111]

5.2.5 Summary

In sum, this review of the proposals, guidelines, and actual recommendations at EU level, illustrates that the EU encourages its Member States to develop family-friendly policies. However, even though the issues of parental leave, childcare, prevention of child poverty, and sharing of caring responsibilities, are identifiable in EU documents, they still only constitute aims but no binding agreements, except for the few directives that exist. Altogether, according to EU discourse, social protection systems must be made more conducive to a high level of employment and a better work-life balance for families. All EU countries seem to follow this strategy in order to secure their welfare systems (the frame of sustainable welfare). There is more and more family policy, but, still, more as a means to address issues of demography (population ageing, low fertility rates), changing family structures and human capital (decline in skilled labour supply), than as an aim to promote the well-being of families. Thus, family policy has become more important, but above all, since it is considered to have relevance to *economic concerns* (family policy as a productive factor, cf. Hantrais 2004a: 106, 213,

[111] Vladimír Špidla, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, has suggested that there might even come a proposal giving fathers not only strong incentives but even a legal obligation to take parental leave (EMMA 2007, Süddeutsche 2007). This would certainly be untraditional EU policy, but this is, according to Špidla, part of the discussion with the social partners. The background: women earn less than men and this may to a large extent result from career breaks associated with childrearing. Recent Norwegian debate on reserving larger parts of the parental leave for the father, in a similar vein as the Icelandic scheme, was justified in the same manner.

Lewis, Knijn, Martin and Ostner 2008: 262). As Duncan explains, social policy is, then, used to change the situation of population ageing and birth decline, through reconciliation policies which allows men and women to work and have babies (2002: 310). Such positive and supportive policies are easier to get approval for than pension cuts or increased retirement age. Reconciliation policies are thus acknowledged as contributing to the economic goals of the Union. In the words of Hantrais, "The interest shown in family matters at EU level has generally been confined to issues concerned with working conditions and arrangements that impinge on family life, rather than family policies *per se*" (2004a: 211). The language, however, is one of the OMC: Member States should learn from each other's experiences and build on best practice by exchanging data and information. This is perhaps not so surprising since the issue is often discussed in the context of the EES. Lisa Pavan-Woolfe, Director for Gender Equality, European Commission, used the following phrases in a speech: "At European level, we can promote reconciliation in different ways, through the existing directives, with the resources of the Structural Funds and within the European Processes based on the open method of co-ordination between Member States, in the area of Employment, Social Inclusion and Pension" (2002). This emphasizes that reconciliation of work and family life is an all-embracing issue which cannot be restricted to one field.

According to Annesley (2007: 196), paid employment for all adults is promoted through the Lisbon agenda, and this agenda has a strong social democratic foundation. The (admittedly few) family policy comments have similarities with certain national, social democratic arguments. The focus on how both parents should work is one example. Thus, to claim that the EU is applying economic arguments, while Member States are occupied with the well-being of children, is not completely accurate. Annesley concludes (2007: 196) that the Lisbon social model is social democratic rather than neo-liberal. Annesley also finds that "reconciliation aims feature strongly in the EES" (2007: 201). The relation between how IOs and individual countries justify policy reforms is an issue I return to in chapter 9.

In EU level policy views, there are some signs of defamilisation or at least a type of policy usually associated with a Nordic welfare model. While it would be

inaccurate to classify EU social policy development as moving in this direction (cf. Mahon 2002), it seems to be the case for certain aspects of family policy. The following overt or indirect values, found in the different fields, add up to the promotion of certain policies which contradict the traditional family policies of at least some of the Member States: fathers should take more responsibility, and there should be better rewards for accepting caring responsibilities for both women, and men as well as the focus on public/private childcare, instead of family, as both parents should work. Also, family policy arrangements, in contradiction to other fields of social policy, most notably pensions and employment, needs to be extended rather than diminished.

Summing up the family policy ideas expressed at the EU level in the framework of Campbell (table 5.3), short and well-paid parental leave, provision of childcare from infants until school age, and making men take more responsibility for childrearing, appear to be the most important programmatic ideas. Home care allowances, like the Finnish or Norwegian one, is mentioned once, and that is within the not yet very developed *European Alliance for Families*. Moreover, family-friendly policies are regarded as having the potential to increase economic growth and mitigate problems associated with demographic change. This idea of family policy as a productive factor is the most important paradigmatic idea, and the demographic crisis and uncertain sustainability of welfare schemes are the most important frames.

These themes might have limited impact in terms of creating a distinct EU family policy, but must be considered politically important in reflecting the recognition of family affairs as one of the main contributors to sustainable welfare states. As a main trend, one could say that the EU thinks it has a say, an interest, and a legitimate reason to give advice on family related issues. Although no explicit family policy exists, policies in this area are recognized as important, and adding all the different references of family policies within the different fields of social protection addressed by the EU, leaves us with a distinct number of policy ideas. Most of the issues (reconciliation, parental leave, childcare) are treated in several areas, since social policy is considered a productive factor. The analysis offers several insights about an emerging policy, and how the EU expresses views on the aims, instruments

and (unintended) effects (distribution, fairness, participation, sex-roles) of national family policy. The EU encourages Member States to develop family-friendly policies, and there is a discourse on reconciliation of work and family life which dominate all documents.

Table 5.2: Overview of EU family policy ideas based on Campbell (1998, 2002)

Type of idea	Characteristics and examples
Paradigmatic	Family-friendly policies benefit the whole society; family policy as a productive factor
Programmatic	Reconciliation policies; Short, well paid parental leave schemes Provision of childcare from infants to school age Incentives for men to spend time with their children Home Care Allowance positive (only in the European Alliance for Families)
Frames	Demographic crisis Sustainability of the welfare state

Sources: EU documents within employment, social inclusion, pensions, health, demography, and gender equality.

Reconciliation policies are usually understood as policies for childcare, parental and childcare leave, being close to Campbell's category of programmatic ideas, and this is how I have classified them. However, the categories in his model are not clear cut, nor entirely mutually exclusive. The idea of the reconciliation of work and family life includes a diagnosis of the problem faced by countries, as well as a set of cause-effect beliefs and solutions, making it also resemble frames and paradigmatic ideas. These comments on Campbell's framework are developed further in chapter 6.

5.3 Conclusion and outlook

This chapter has discussed the status of family policies in the EU, arguing that family policy ideas are emerging. There is a growing interest in, and understanding of, family policy as an important issue to address. Further work is needed to determine the

conditions under which an EU family policy will develop. So far I draw the following conclusions.

First, the EU has no family policy in the sense of a coherent set of objectives for government activity in this policy area, but several policies that affect the situation of families, and ideas about national policy. Family policies are cross-sectoral policies, and there exists several traces of family policy in other EU social policy fields. One implication of this is that when searching for EU policies on the area, the search cannot be restricted to what is narrowly defined as family policies, but must include other fields of social policy (Daly 2000). Second, however, these policies must, first and foremost, be interpreted as facilitators of the overall aim of economic growth, and less as an attempt at developing common family policies across Europe. The way the EU concentrates on the family as a remedy for the threats against the welfare state (ageing society) is perhaps the most obvious example of this. With reference to Hantrais (2007), and Lewis and Ostner (1995), the chapter pointed at strong ideological dividing lines, conflicts of interest, and the focus on workers´ rather than citizens´ rights, as reasons why there is no distinctive EU family policy.

So far the findings of the chapter are in line with earlier research on this topic. But in two respects the chapter takes another view than most other contributions, and this constitutes the third and fourth conclusions: although the EU does not have a family policy unit and the Treaties do not include a stated family policy, the EU´s view of social policy as economically favourable (a productive factor), has resulted in some recommendations and targets with the potential of influencing domestic reforms in Member States. And, based on the recent trend of the holding of special EU conferences on family policy, as well as the *European Alliance for Families*, and, due to the commitment to address related issues like demography, I have argued that one has already seen, and might witness more EU initiatives affecting family life within a short time. In this regard, the chapter has also argued that family policy should not be an impossible field into which OMC-similar processes could be applied. This goes some way towards challenging the conventional wisdom of family policy being absent at EU level, and this new way of addressing family policy issues increases the

potential influence on national family policy. I will elaborate on the possible influence of EU family policy ideas in chapters 7 and 8.

By this I do not mean to present the EU as the main actor in developing family policy ideas. Ideas expressed by the EU do not necessarily originate with this institution (Bergqvist and Jungar 2000, Threlfall 2000). They could be incorporated into existing strategies because Member States, carrying out such policies, seem to have successfully dealt with common challenges, like women's employment rate. Kaufmann's summary some years ago still gives a pretty good description of what the EU has, and has not: "there is not yet a family policy on the European level, there is only an attempt to structure the field by a comparative description of national policies and by programmatic declarations" (2002: 421).

However, in addressing questions of potential EU influence on family policy reforms, one should study whether Member (and non-member) States conduct similar reform strategies, what aspects of the welfare models they question and recognize as problems, and which solutions they prefer. Also, attention should be given to the information about problems and solutions that is considered relevant and legitimate by the policy-makers, and on what grounds decisions are made. Such investigation might further challenge conventional wisdom on EU activities and relevance within the family area.

While this chapter has devoted much space to argue that several EU family policy ideas exists and identified such traces, particularly concerning parental leave and childcare, the following chapter can begin more directly, with discussing OECD policy in the area, since this IO actually has a more explicit family policy.

Chapter 6 The OECD as a family policy actor

> "Social policy within one country can no longer be understood or made without reference to the global context within which the country finds itself" (Deacon 2007: 3).

This chapter asks, first, how the OECD develops and disseminates family policy ideas and how autonomous it is in this process (section 6.1)? Second, what kind of ideas are developed (section 6.2)? These ideas are organized in the framework developed by Campbell (1998, 2002), and used in the previous chapter. The chapter is based on an analysis of official documents and interviews with OECD officials. The documents studied are mainly the report series *Babies and Bosses* and *Starting Strong*. I concentrate on the general family policy of the OECD, and, as I did in the previous chapter, leave the presentation of country specific advice, when it exists, to chapters 7 (Germany) and 8 (Norway). Also, as for the chapter on the EU, I use countries other than my two cases to illustrate the OECD approach to family policy, and draw on other social policy fields when this helps illustrate the OECD working mode. The central arguments of the chapter are, first, that the extensive OECD work on family policy merits an investigation of whether adaption to OECD standards and advice are part of national reform debates. Second, the development of OECD advice is highly controlled by national governments, making questions of potential reform pressure more complicated to investigate. Third, the content of some OECD family policy ideas is close to Nordic family policies and has a strong focus on overall societal benefits stemming from comprehensive public childcare and parental leave policies.

6.1 Development and dissemination of ideas: playing the family policy idea game

Schulz-Nieswandt and Maier-Rigaud (2007) claim that the OECD itself rarely develops the ideas it promotes (2007: 408). This argument could be further elaborated

upon by reference to the different roles the OECD can play in the ´idea game`. Marcussen (2002) identifies five such roles. The OECD may be an

- ideational artist (develop new ideas)
- ideational arbitrator (provide arenas for learning where national policy makers meet and exchange ideas)
- ideational authority (provide legitimacy for certain ideas)
- ideational agent (spread ideas from individual member states) and
- ideational agency (produces knowledge Member States are interested in)

Since these roles will be discussed throughout the chapter, I do not elaborate on them, but restrict myself to give one example of the fourth role, that of an ideational agent: One of my interviewees explains that countries sometimes turn to the OECD to get an overview of what other countries have done in a certain field, using the organization as a pre-paid consultancy body (OECD interview 2).

A common denominator for all these roles is the bringing together of policy makers and the exposure to particular views of how welfare state policies should be designed. The OECD-method par excellence to achieve this is the peer review:

> "Among the OECD's core strengths is its ability to offer its 30 members a framework to compare experiences and examine "best practices" in a host of areas from economic policy to environmental protection. OECD peer reviews, where each country's policy in a particular area is examined by fellow members on an equal basis, lie at the heart of this process" (OECD 2007a: 1).

A peer review could be defined as "the systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a State by other States (…), with the ultimate goal of helping the reviewed State improve its policy-making, adopt best practices, and comply with established standards and principles" (Pagani 2002: 4). Apart from the participating countries, "OECD staff experts also play an important role in supporting and stimulating the process" (OECD 2007a: 2). [112]

[112] For more information on the actors involved in peer reviews, see Pagani (2002) and OECD (2007a).

The *Economic Survey* is one kind of peer review, and probably the most important publication of the OECD. The dissemination of best practice through this (and other studies) is a core task of the organization (Armingeon 2004: 226). Every 18 month, OECD *Economic Surveys* assess a country's performance, based on specific guidelines, indicators, and benchmarks. Since the 1990s, it has also included some social policy issues with economic implications (Armingeon 2004: 226). This is seen throughout the survey, but is particularly obvious when the chapter devoted to a country specific issue is on social policy. One example is found in the 2007 survey on Norway, when labour supply, sickness absence and disability were the topics (OECD 2007b, chapter four).

In addition to this kind of peer review on individual countries, the OECD offers thematical peer reviews that cover several countries on one topic (Pagani 2002: 5). Regarding family life, two such peer reviews are interesting; the *Thematic Review on Early Childhood Education and Care* (ECEC), resulting in the reports *Starting Strong* I and II, and *Babies and Bosses*, published as five volumes.[113] The policy ideas the OECD promotes in these reports are discussed in section 6.2.

The peer review process may vary and there are, for instance, differences between reviews covering one or many countries. Still, there are some stages that are common to all. These are the preparatory phase, the consultation phase, and the assessment phase (Pagani 2002: 10). A concrete example from the *Thematic Review on Early Childhood Education and Care* is instructive. The term *ECEC*, early childhood education and care, "includes all arrangements providing care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content" (OECD 2001b: 14). The ECEC homepage[114] describes the methodology of the study as having four elements (see also *Starting Strong* I 2001: 16, *Starting Strong* II 2006: 233):

(1) Preparation by participating countries of the background report;

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[113] Interestingly, the *Starting Strong* and *Babies and Bosses* reports do not use the term peer review when describing the methodology of the review, but what is described is without doubt a peer review process similar to what I presented. Interviews confirm that *Babies and Bosses* and *Starting Strong* I and II have a similar working method to *Economic Surveys* (OECD interview 5, Norwegian interview 3).

[114] OECD ECEC homepage, retrieved 22.4.2008, available at http://www.oecd.org/document/63/0,3343,en_33873108_39418658_1941759_1_1_1_1,00.html

(2) Review team visits to participating countries;

(3) Preparation of the country note; and

(4) Preparation of the comparative report.

Step two, the fact-finding mission, is not part of every peer review, but is important in *Babies and Bosses*, *Starting Strong*, and the *Economic Surveys*. Common to thematic and individual peer reviews is a final report that assesses actions taken by the countries, identifies shortcomings, and issues recommendations (Pagani 2002: 5). This report is based on consensus between the OECD and the Member State, and draws on the national background reports. The OECD first presents the draft report to the country under review and adjusts it to the feedback it receives (Marcussen 2002, OECD interviews 2, 6). Then the report is discussed in the relevant OECD committee, depending on the topic. The *Starting Strong* reports were discussed in the Education Committee.[115]

The question about whether this OECD working method really matters, and is effective, is the topic of chapters 7, on Germany, and 8, on Norway. However, the theoretical reasons why peer reviews could have influence are briefly outlined here as an elaboration of what has already been laid out in chapter 3. As the "idea game" concept catches, the OECD is not able to force states to act in a certain way. The OECD cannot exert regulatory or financial pressure (Beyeler 2004: 1). [116] It is all about "soft persuasion" or "soft enforcement". The OECD relies on peer pressure, which, to quote Pagani (2002: 5), can be described as three mechanisms:

(i) a mix of formal recommendations and informal dialogue by the peer countries;

(ii) public scrutiny, comparisons, and, in some cases, even ranking among countries; and

[115] For details on the process, see Pagani (2002). The *Babies and Bosses* volumes were discussed in the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee while Country Surveys are discussed in the Economic Development and Review Committee (EDRC), where it is again adjusted to comments from the country under review or other countries, in such a manner that all parties agree. Contrary to *Starting Strong* I and II, background reports written by the countries, as well as the country notes from the OECD in *Babies and Bosses*, are not available on the OECD webpage (the Australian report is the only one which was published). According to my informants the countries were asked, but for various reasons preferred the background reports to remain unpublished and not disseminated. This means that I have not had access to this material.

[116] Cf. Bøås and McNeil (2003) for a discussion of organizations which have technical assistance and/or programme lending as important roles in addition to giving policy advice.

(iii) the impact of all the above on domestic public opinion, national administrations and policy makers.

One example of Pagani´s first mechanism of recommendations, which will be discussed more closely in section 6.2, is how the UK, in the second volume of *Babies and Bosses*, is advised to; "In line with announced plans, reform "maternity leave" into "parental leave" and give fathers the opportunity to share in the use of entitlements" (OECD 2003a: 15, see appendix 6 for more examples). Another example of this mechanism, emphasizing the importance of dialogue, can be found in one of my interviews with officials from DELSA (the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs). This answer was given to a question on where ideas originate;

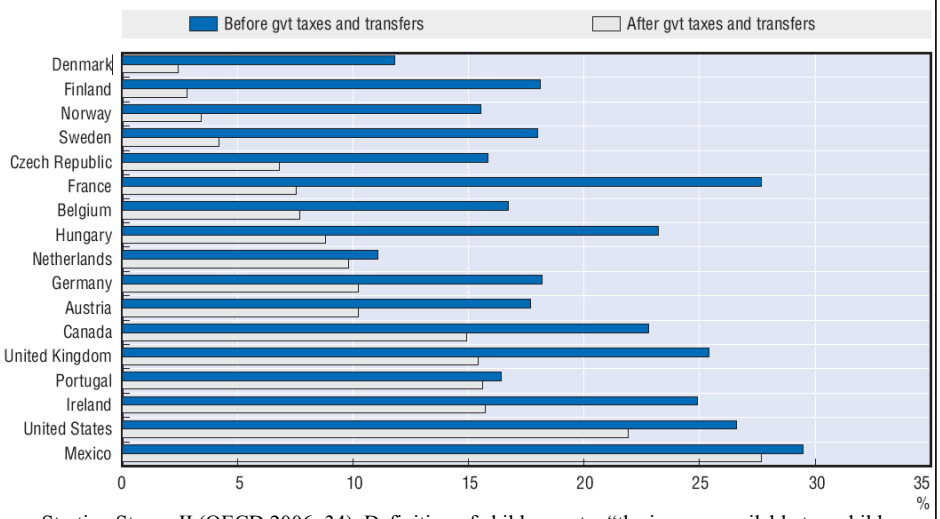
> "The organization (the OECD, my edition) fosters the exchange of best practices, advertising and sharing knowledge among a greater audience. For example, when we went to Austria for the second Babies and Bosses review there [was] this "audit" undertaken by a consultancy firm that looked at companies to see how they could improve the work life balance of their employees and at the same time their own productivity. There was huge interest in that across the OECD. So, when at the next ELSAC - meeting (ELSAC = Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee, my addition) the Austrian delegate spend a lot of time answering questions on that very issue. The whole idea spread quite quickly across policy makers (OECD interview 5, my emphasis).[117]

The second mechanism of comparisons and rankings could be illustrated by a figure presenting the effect of national social transfers on child poverty (see appendix 6 for further examples). Figure 6.1 (1.7) has been copied from *Starting Strong* II (OECD 2006a: 34). It shows how social transfers, e.g. income redistribution measures or family policies such as child benefits, influence the rate of poverty in OECD countries. Look, for instance, at Germany and Norway, and the OECD message is clear. While both countries have a child poverty rate, before taxes and transfers, of 16-18 percent, Norway is left with only 3, but Germany with 11 percent, afterwards. The

[117] The topic referred to in the statement can be found in the volumes of Babies and Bosses as a discussion on "the business case of family policy" (cf. section 5.2). This quote also illustrates how the OECD can play the role as an ideational arbitrator.

effectiveness of German policies to redistribute and avoid poverty is thus not high compared to Norway, or the other Nordic countries, for that matter. The point is that countries´ performances are collected, making some countries come out as forerunners and others as laggards. The latter group can experience a "naming and shaming" effect, which again, could provoke new measures or accelerate the implementation of already decided reforms.

Figure 6.1: Example of potential peer pressure



Source: Starting Strong II (OECD 2006: 34). Definition of child poverty: "the income available to a child – assuming a fair distribution of resources within the family and making allowances for family size and composition – is less than half the median available to children growing up in the same society" (OECD 2006: 33). The figure shows the perecentage of poor children before and after social transfers.

Whether policy makers are aware of, and influenced by this, is discussed in chapters 7 and 8. To anticipate findings, policy makers are particularly familiar with, and focused on rankings. According to an OECD official within DELSA, countries are less interested in receiving advice on what to do in a field, than in seeing where they stand relative to other countries. They want comparative statistics, to see how they come out, and then they can draw their own conclusions (OECD interview 3).

An instance of Pagani´s third mechanism is how the *Babies and Bosses* volume 2 (2003) received a lot of public attention in Ireland, because the government used it to get a debate going (OECD interview 5). This may have an impact and increased the likelihood for reforms (this is further elaborated upon below).[118]

Scholarly literature describes the peer review process as a process based on the principle of consensus (Marcussen 2002: 207, Pagani 2002: 24, Schäfer 2006: 74, Armingeon 2007: 928, OECD 2007a: 5, Ervik forthcomming 2009).[119] This has relevance for the question of what kind of influence the OECD might have. The focus on consensus indicates that only critique that is welcomed by countries under review is expressed in the final reports; "This process means there is a government "buy-in" to the economic policy advice offered and hence a common ownership of the product" (OECD 2007a: 5). One could of course argue that it makes little sense to recommend policies which the Member State has no interest in, or intention of following, when the OECD has no enforcement mechanism, and relies on persuasion.[120] But the consensus approach still questions the whole usefulness of studying OECD influence on domestic politics. At least it means that researchers should remember how advice is developed when asking whether this advice makes countries act in a certain way. As Marcussen (2002) argues, OECD ideas provide authority and legitimacy and could thus be used consciously by Member States to secure support for decisions already taken.

Adding that countries to some extent can even order a certain kind of critique and recommendation, an important finding from my expert interviews, further questions such an approach. For example, just like countries can ask the OECD to moderate their critique, they can ask it to sharpen critique when this serves a national agenda (OECD interview 6). Then the OECD is more of an ideational agency, producing the knowledge Member States are interested in. Or, in the words of

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[118] Starting Strong 1 (2001: 17-18) and II (2006: 222) describe how the report stimulated debates. Cf. these for more information.

[119] Surprisingly, the authors referred to do not discuss this issue in much detail and sometimes this information is restricted to a footnote (e.g. Armingeon 2007: 928). Examples of rather comprehensive discussions are found in two newspaper articles by Kildal and Kuhnle (2004a, 2007). In my opinion, this fact deserves more attention.

[120] Similarly, it is sometimes argued that politicians must follow what their voters want instead of doing what politicians think is the best policy. Otherwise they will loose the next election and thus the possibility of contributing to change. See for instance Hantrais (2004: 197) for such an explanation.

Marcussen; the organization is *trendy* more than a *trendsetter* (2002: 228). Still, the different roles the organization plays illustrate how important the OECD is.

One more important finding that further mitigates the potential OECD effect on national policy has been uncovered in my interviews: recruiting countries for thematic reviews of social policies is done by self-selection rather than pre-selection by the OECD (OECD interview 3, 5). Participation in studies like the *Babies and Bosses*, the *ECEC*, or the recent disability study (OECD 2006b), is voluntary. They are financed by the participating countries. Thus, countries with a particular problem, or an intention to do (or not do) something in a special area, might choose to participate (or not) due to domestic interest. This would mean that the OECD plays a role corresponding to what Marcussen (2002) calls ideational authority, where its conclusions are used to justify behaviour. As an example, an OECD official says that the Norwegian government wanted them to contribute to the ongoing reform process on health issues in Norway, by opening the national debate (OECD interview 3). The Norwegian government, however, refers to how the OECD says change must take place because many Norwegians, despite comprehensive public policies, and compared to other countries, are out of work due to sickness, rehabilitation and disability. The reason why Norway is part of the three-country study is not explained further than that Norway has a very high level of sickness absence (e.g. White Paper 2006: 149). That Norway chose to be one of the first three countries participating (out of 12 in all) is not mentioned. From this we learn that different policy objectives can drive different countries.

A further issue to consider, regarding the self-selection sampling method, becomes clear from this excerpt from an interview with an OECD official working on family issues. He says the following on why countries volunteer to participate:

> "You should actually ask countries. Some governments participate to show how good their policies are, and they want to show that they are doing well in international comparisons. There are other countries who specifically sign up with the idea "Let's show our electorate how bad we are doing, create a national debate on the issues at hand and create an environment for change, in which reforms can be implemented". This also affects how OECD advice can lead to reform" (OECD interview 5).

In the *Babies and Bosses* series one could suspect that Sweden or Denmark enjoyed "shining" as providers of good practice, while Southern European countries like Italy or Spain appear to be representatives of welfare models poorly represented in the series. And Ireland is a country that seems to have made particular use of the OECD reports. Referring back to chapter 5, on EU family policy initiatives and how Ireland was the first country to organize an EU Presidency conference on family policy, this country seems to have made the best possible use of international organizations to push domestic debate. Obviously, timing (and even the financial situation since there is a fee for countries under review) also plays a certain role, as countries with family issues high on the agenda are probably more likely to sign up. Moreover, countries may of course participate to gain knowledge about how their social security systems are working, without always knowing in advance what the outcome will be, and without a hidden, strategic agenda of gaining legitimacy for behaviour already planned.[121]

Still, while several studies have acknowledged the consensual character of OECD peer reviews, this self-selection, which is probably based on either a wish to increase reform support or being presented as a forerunner, has hardly been discussed before.[122] This might be because so many studies have taken the Economic Survey as their point of departure, a publication which is carried out on a regular basis (every 18 months) for all member countries, without any discussions on who should participate. These are not run on the basis of project funds, but taken from annual national contributions (OECD interview 3).

Needless to say, this self-selection sampling is open to national or party political tactics, and underlines how scholars seeking to investigate foreign influence

[121] The suspicion that countries take part for tactical reasons and often know the result in advance, and whether the self-selection-bias is as problematic as I claim, should be investigated further. One strategy could be to check whether the countries participating voluntarily are always those at the top, wishing to shine as providers of best practice ("forerunners"), and those on the bottom ("laggards") seeking reform support. However, this strategy is flawed for several reasons, e.g. the fact that the OECD will do what it can to cover countries representing different models and degrees of successful policies. This means that it is not only countries wishing OECD support taking part, but still questions the usefulness of studying OECD-influence on national reforms.

[122] According to OECD staff, there is no official OECD document describing how project funded work is carried out. Instead, every directorate has its own practices. DELSA works per theme, not per publication. The *Babies and Bosses* project was initiated after the Member Countries had accepted a project proposal presented to them in the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee. The work on disability has relied on a similar process. This means that the starting up of a new review relies on the interest of the Member States, trends in popularity and so on.

on national politics must be cautious. Pagani touches on a similar issue when saying that "officials of the country may have an interest in peer reviews, as a means of stimulating reform in their national policies and practices" (2002: 9). As emphasized by one high level official with the OECD, the impact of his organization's advice depends a lot on what a member country wants to do with it and why they signed up with the review in the first place (OECD interview 5). I conclude this section by repeating what was said in the chapter on methodology; when discussing cross border influences in social policy one should ask oneself whether one faces international advice or domestic uploaded reform plans. The OECD is not completely autonomous in its identification of policy failure and success, and its reports are not a strictly objective view from the outside.[123]

6.2 OECD advice within the family policy field

The OECD issues both general and country specific advice within the area of family-friendly policies. This section will discuss the views of the OECD in a general way, drawing mainly on the *Starting Strong* (6.2.1) and *Babies and Bosses* (6.2.2) reports that cover many Member States. Working papers and the family database will be discussed briefly (6.2.3). *Economics Surveys*, which are individually tailored, will be used more in subsequent chapters. I present the family policy advice coming from the OECD with reference to Campbell's framework, introduced and applied in previous chapters. I focus on the issues parental leave and infrastructure, which are the corresponding reform areas that will be addressed and analyzed in relation to advice from IOs in chapters 7 and 8.[124]

How does the OECD approach family policy? The definition of *family-friendly policies* that used to be on the top of the OECD webpage on families and

[123] At a first glance this discussion might give the impression that IOs have no autonomy, a view found in much theory on international relations (cf. Diehl 2005 and Barnett and Finnemore 2004 for a critical account and different view based on seeing IOs as actors with at least some power). However, this is not what I argue. I emphasize how, in the processes for developing advice and policy ideas, it is possible for Member States to up-load their national ideas, meaning that advice from IOs must be treated with caution. However, I do not say that IOs cannot act on their own, and pursue their own agenda. They can, something Marcussen´s (2002, 2004) different roles in the idea game emphasize.

[124] Mahon (2006) provides a more comprehensive analysis of OECD family policy ideas as well as an historical account of its development. She does not, however, discuss the possible impact of this policy.

children underlines that it is not family policies, as such, which are proposed, but rather policies that intend to increase labour market participation, and thus have some family policy implications:

> ”Family-friendly policies are defined as those employment-oriented social policies that facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life by fostering adequacy of family resources and child development, favour the parental choice about work and care, and promote gender equality in employment opportunities” (my emphasis).[125]

At the time of writing (November 2008), this definition is not available on the webpage anymore. Instead, a new definition is given by the OECD, that is very similar to the one it uses in the five volumes of the *Babies and Bosses* project;

> “Family policies are defined as those policies that increase resources of households with dependent children; foster child development; reduce barriers to having children and combining work and family commitments; and, promote gender equity in employment opportunities”.[126]

According to an OECD official, this definitional change does not reflect any huge policy shift, but is rather the result of editing. As such, the reason for the new definitions is not to be understood as an answer to criticism or a new priority. However, it should be noted that while the *Babies and Bosses* project has been focussing quite a lot on families, in connection with work commitments, a new OECD project on children’s well-being is being prepared. This project will for instance focus on child development and the conditions children are living under. As such, it is probably fair to say that the OECD is extending its interest for families, which is the impression one also gets from the definitional change. The following discussion of OECD family policy ideas will show how strong they are connected to issues of economy and employment, but also, that the advice of the organization is more than

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[125] http://www.oecd.org/topic/0,2686,en_2649_34819_1_1_1_1_37457,00.html, retrieved 09.05.2006.
[126] http://www.oecd.org/topic/0,3373,en_2649_34819_1_1_1_1_37419,00.html, retrieved 14.05.2008. However, the definitions of *family-friendly policies* also vary from volume to volume. The fourth volume does for instance include financial incentives to work for families with children in the definition (OECD 2005a: 11).

neo-liberal policy, which is often defined as opposing public intervention and promoting only free market-solutions.

6.2.1 OECD family policy ideas expressed through *Starting Strong*[127]

Starting Strong I (OECD 2001b) and *II* (OECD 2006a) focus on aspects such as infrastructure, parental leave, women's labour market participation, and reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, but mainly on early childhood education and care. They provide a comparative analysis of policies in OECD countries, including Norway and Germany, and identify promising strategies. Stated goals are to provide comparative information, and to improve policies in member countries (OECD 2001b: 7, 12). The reports identify trends, main policy developments and issues, in a summarizing, non-country-specific way. There is little direct criticism or policy advice. Phrases such as "Countries are trying to develop …" are used instead, to describe how countries are dealing with challenges.[128] The following quote illustrates how shortcomings are addressed in a way which does not resulting in individually tailored advice:

> "Major quality concerns that emerged during the review include: lack of coherence of ECEC policy and provision; the low status and training of staff in the social welfare sector; the lower standards of provision for children under 3; and the tendency for children from low-income families to receive inferior services" (OECD 2001b: 9).

Instead, the report gives examples, not to serve as models, but as "inspiration for reflection and discussion" (2001b: 45). This is emphasized several times (e.g. OECD 2001b: 125, OECD 2006a: 221). However, it is still possible to identify OECD advice

[127] This home page contains all documents and provides an overview of how the review was organized; http://www.oecd.org/document/3/0,3343,en_2649_39263231_27000067_1_1_1_1,00.html

[128] The end of the last chapter is instructive in this regard. All (!) countries are praised for their accomplishments and what has been done recently is referred to as impressive (OEDC 2001b: 137). The same is said in the introduction (OECD 2001b: 12).

on national family policy.[129] First of all, *Starting Strong* I identifies eight key elements of a successful ECEC policy:

1. The ECEC policy must have a clear vision for children from birth to 8 years old
2. A lifelong –learning approach
3. Universal access to childcare for all age groups
4. Substantial public investment in services and infrastructure
5. Emphasis on quality improvement and assurance
6. Training of staff
7. Systematic monitoring and data collection – need for more international cooperation
8. More research and continuous evaluation

In the second review, this list is extended to contain ten points. They are rather similar, but some have been added. The well-being of children and their early development is, for instance, included more directly in the policy areas that OECD countries are advised to consider.

Along with some of these "key elements" (*Starting Strong* I) or "policy areas for consideration" (*Starting Strong* II), general policy advice is presented, e.g. a call for more attention towards kindergarten coverage and parental leave, public investments and increase the qualifications of staff. The closing chapter of *Starting Strong* I on "Policy Lessons from the Thematic Review", elaborates to some extent on these comments, but there are still very few policy prescriptions (OECD 2001b: 125-137). One obvious reason for this is that there exist country notes on each participating country, which include country specific analyses, and to some extent policy recommendations, although not a distinct section giving specific recommendations. Still, by leaving individual countries out of the final report's policy lessons and by avoiding rankings or leagues in this chapter, *Starting Strong* I increases the unbinding character of the report, and may reduce its potential policy driving force. In *Starting*

[129] Most chapters of report II open with an overview of "What did Starting Strong recommend?" (my emphasis). This is conspicuous when report I does not use the term recommendation.

Strong II this is somewhat different and individual countries are referred to all through the report. Drawing on Campbell (1998, 2002), I identify the following ideas.

Programmatic ideas

For the policies I take a particular interest in, parental leave and infrastructure, some advice is given in the reports. They provide an overview of the parental leave schemes of the countries under review and conclude that:

> "Well-paid and job-protected parental leave policies for about a year followed by a guaranteed place for children in ECEC seem to be key, rather than long-term, low-paid leave schemes, which resemble social welfare payments. The latter schemes are generally taken up by poorly educated women, who are effectively excluded from the labour market, and gender stereotyping of care and domestic work is reinforced" (2001b: 34).

In other words; it is the Nordic parental leave system that is presented as a model (or programmatic idea in the framework of Campbell). Other kinds, e.g. of the long-term, but low-paid leave found in Germany at the time of the review, are criticized (see also OECD 2006a: 23, 208). The *Starting Strong* reports also refer to research supporting the claim that Scandinavian countries are providing best practice (2006a: 32). Regarding childcare, it is said that member countries, particularly, should improve coverage for infants (children less than three years old), and, again Scandinavian countries serve as best practice, although countries like Norway have some way to go before meeting demand (OECD 2001b: 54). The OECD does not identify a percentage goal like the EU does in its Barcelona targets (see chapter 5). According to *Starting Strong* II, this is because high coverage is only one of many indicators of a good ECEC system, quality being another.[130] While these comments on parental leave and childcare are referred to as reconciliation policies in the *Babies and Bosses* project, reconciliation of work and family life is hardly referred to in the *Starting Strong* reports.

[130] At least this illustrates that the EU and OECD relate their discussions and recommendations to each other. In the *Starting Strong* reports, the Barcelona targets and the EC childcare network are referred to several times. In the second report, it is, for instance, said that Norway is one of five countries fulfilling the Barcelona targets (OECD 2006a: 78). The *Babies and Bosses* volumes also make references to the EU.

When it comes to reducing child poverty, *Starting Strong* I shows that the Nordic policies are very effective in this respect too (OECD 2001b: 35, cf. figure in section 6.1). This is expressed like this; "Countries with low rates of child poverty redistribute income to overcome inequality in market income and support female labour force participation through generous parental leave policies and publicly-funded ECEC" (2001b: 36-37). Comments on cash-for-care benefits (*kontantstøtte*), are more or less absent, and not evaluated positively or negatively. Both reports emphasize the need for governmental activity and funding; "Without strong government investment and involvement, it is difficult to achieve quality pedagogical goals and broad system aims (social inclusion, child health and well-being, gender equality)" (OECD 2006a: 211). This does not harmonize with the view that the OECD is strictly neo-liberal. This might be a new development, with the OECD modifying the message of an organization created to analyze economics and employment related issues. According to McBride and Williams (2001), Armingeon and Beyeler (2004), and Deacon (2007), the OECD had a more neo-liberal approach in the 1980s and 1990s. It probably also illustrates that there are tensions within the OECD and its different directorates.

Frames

How are these recommendations justified and what are the programmatic ideas supposed to be a solution for? This involves more overall views on the purpose of social policy (paradigmatic ideas), as well as frames helping to make solutions acceptable. Beginning with the latter, *Starting Strong* I could for instance be said to include Campbell's idea category of frames in the following way:

> "• Ageing populations, declining fertility rates, and a greater proportion of children living in loneparent families are part of the changing demographic landscape. Countries with the highest female employment rates are those with higher completed fertility rates, which suggests that female employment and childrearing are complementary activities.
> • The sharp rise in dual-earner households, spurred by increased female employment, makes ECEC and parental leave policies more important for the well-being of families. Women are

> more likely than men to work in non-standard employment which carries lower economic and social status" (OECD 2001b: 22).

What the report says is that such change must be acknowledged, understood, and responded to by governments (cf. OECD 2001b: 125). This use of frames resembles the use of globalization in other welfare state debates.

Although the report is sometimes written in a retrospective manner, by saying, for instance, that "governments have invested in ECEC in order to …", there can be no doubt that the OECD seeks to contribute to ongoing debate by presenting its view on coming challenges. *Starting Strong* is thus not only about reporting what has been done, but also partly about issuing advice. *Starting Strong* II explains the need to invest in ECEC, by reference to four broad contextual challenges or driving forces (OECD 2006a: 20):

> "● The rise of the service economy and the influx of women into salaried employment.
> ● The necessary reconciliation of work and family responsibilities in a manner more equitable for women.
> ● The demographic challenges of falling fertility and increased immigration, particularly in European countries.
> ● The need to break the cycle of poverty and inequality that begins in early childhood".

What could be referred to as the discourse on *sustainability of the welfare state* is a representative of Campbell's frames. The demographic development, with falling fertility rates, is seen to challenge future financial foundations of the whole welfare state, as the relationship between young workers and pensioners changes gradually. Thus, family policies that can reduce this gap are welcomed.

Paradigmatic ideas

ECEC policies are further justified with reference to a number of goals, both child and societal goals: to improve children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, reduce social inequality and increase social integration, facilitate reconciliation of work and family life, and strengthen life long learning (OECD 2001b: 13). It is

interesting to see how poverty and equality issues receive so much attention, since this is not directly relating to economic growth or the labour market. This might suggest that a new understanding is gaining ground within (parts of) the OECD, which used to be expert driven and focussed mainly on economic goals. This would support Kildal´s argument (forthcoming 2009), that the EU and OECD are converging, in the sense that both organizations recommend similar policies which seek to meet different societal interests, although still with a strong emphasis on economic matters. An instructive overview of such OECD ideas is found where *Starting Strong* I lists policy objectives to justify public investment in early childhood education and care, because this will be (2001b: 38):

> "– facilitating the labour market participation of mothers with young children and the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities;
> – supporting children and families "at risk" while promoting equal opportunities to education and lifelong learning;
> – supporting environments which foster children's overall development and well-being;
> – enhancing school readiness and children's later educational outcomes; and
> – maintaining social integration and cohesion".

There is a rather strong focus on employability in the two reports, and the sections on policy lessons start out with a fairly strong emphasis on reconciliation of work and family life, and how ECEC policies can promote not only the well-being of parents but also "reduce child poverty, promote gender equity, improve education systems, [and] value diversity" (OECD 2001b: 125). Although economic growth and investment are not mentioned directly here, this resembles the idea of welfare policies as a productive factor: social policy and economic performance as compatible and mutually supporting. It emphasizes how social policy can be economically beneficial, for instance by raising employment rates, more than it stresses the well-being of children (cf. Lister 2006, 2008 for criticism of this approach). As Schulz-Nieswandt and Maier-Rigaud (2007) argue in their analysis of OECD pension and employment policy, much

of the OECD advice comes from the belief that social policy should promote economic growth and create strong work incentives (no rights without duties). Social policy is a win-win strategy more than an aim in itself. This view could serve as an example of a paradigmatic idea in the *Starting Strong* reports. A clearer expression of the productive factor argument is found in this quote:

> "In sum, early childhood services deliver externalities9 beyond the benefit of immediate, personal interest or consumption. Early education and care contributes to the public good, e.g. to the general health of a nation's children, to future educational achievement, to labour market volume and flexibility, and to social cohesion" (2006a: 36-37).
> [*footnote 9 page 40 is defining externalities as "*the term used by economists to refer to benefits or costs that accrue to someone other than the individual consumer or producer making the economic decision, e.g. to enrol a child in an early education centre brings benefits to the child, but it also generates benefits for the family (mothers are able to work and contribute to the family budget) and for the economy (as the mother's work contributes to economic production, gives rise to extra revenue and taxes, and allows the State to cut back on social welfare assistance*"*]

The productive factor argument is a good example of a malleable idea offering something to everybody. This idea, of how *ECEC* policies will benefit the countries introducing them, permeates the reports to such a degree that it is tempting to include yet another long quote illustrating this view of having found a universal remedy. Who can oppose *ECEC* policies when such policies bring about prosperity for children, families and society at large?

> "Governmental domains that benefit from the widespread provision of early childhood education and care services are: the national economy (short-term, through the contribution of working women, and long-term through more effective human capital formation); health (better mental and physical health for children and families, less at-risk behaviours, etc.); social welfare and criminal justice (less dependency of families on social welfare; higher earnings for families; more gender equality; less family violence, less criminality, etc.); education (better integration of young children at-risk into primary school, better grade progression, less participation in special education, etc.)" (OECD 2006a: 102-103).

The economically oriented investment strategy is impossible to overlook in this, and other, sections. However, values such as children's rights and self-fulfilment, the general well-being of families, or equality, are also evident.

6.2.2 OECD family policy ideas expressed through *Babies and Bosses*

The last volume of *Babies and Bosses* is a synthesis report covering all OECD countries and, thus, I focus mainly on this report (OECD 2007c). The first four volumes review countries that are not part of my case selection.[131] I still analyze their chapters providing the main findings and policy recommendations, since the reports identify good practice and provide general advice on policy direction for OECD countries, and not only country specific comments (confirmed in OECD interview 5). As Mahon (2006: 180) argues, these are also the parts "most likely to be read by time-pressed policymakers".

All the five *Babies and Bosses* volumes have "Reconciling work and family life" as part of the title. This is indicative of its focus and content; this series is more strongly related to what is called family policy in a domestic context, than are the *Starting Strong* reports. In fact, the series is considered a social and welfare issue and produced by the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, while *Starting Strong* is the responsibility of the Directorate for Education.[132] Furthermore, the *Babies and Bosses* volumes are much more focused on individual countries, as each of the first four volumes deal explicitly with three or four countries, and, with the exception of volume 1, issue country specific recommendations.[133] I will now discuss the content of *Babies and Bosses* based on Campbell's ideas.

Programmatic ideas

Which policies are proposed in *Babies and Bosses*? Which *programmatic ideas* are visible in the reports? In short, OECD Member States should;

[131] Volume 1: Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Volume 2: Austria, Ireland, Japan, Volume 3: New Zealand, Portugal, Switzerland, Volume 4: Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.
[132] Notice how "education" is placed before "care" in the acronym ECEC; Early Childhood Education and Care. Until 2002, the Education Directorate was part of DELSA (Mahon 2007b).
[133] An official with the OECD explains that they started to give country specific recommendations to increase the impact of the study (OECD interview 5).

1. Introduce well paid parental leave policies of moderate length, understood as something between 6 and 12 months
2. Establish incentives for fathers to use leave arrangements
3. Provide childcare and out-of-school hours care, especially childcare for children under age three and out-of-school care. Childcare should preferably be full-time, of high quality and affordable.
4. Encourage family-friendly workplace practices such as part time work, flexible workplace, and the granting of days to care for sick children

The OECD understands these four policies to be reconciliation policies, and the idea of reconciliation of work and family life permeates the whole report. *Babies and Bosses* makes clear that a continuum of support for working families throughout childhood is important, meaning first parental leave and, then, later, preschool and out-of-school care. This programmatic idea is stressed several times (2007c: 18, 119, emphasized in OECD interview 5). The Nordic countries provide this and are praised for it (2007: 98). Nordic countries are in the lead in terms of childcare policy development (OECD 2007c: 159).

The existing family policy model that comes closest to this summary of advice, which is more or less the same as found in the *ECEC*, is found in the Nordic countries. Although the report says that "the Nordic model is (...) not directly exportable to other OECD countries" (2007c: 22), and even if the report is critical towards some aspects of Nordic policies, for instance, whether fathers´ quotas really result in more gender equitable employment and care outcomes, there can be no doubt that the OECD praises many aspects of Nordic family policy. The reason why these are chosen as programmatic ideas is that they contribute to many societal goals. The main message or the paradigmatic idea is that family-friendly policies of this kind can address a number of policy objectives in a way that, with a few exceptions, are compatible with each other. This is the argument of family policy as a productive factor. Still, it is more than just saying that family policy has benefits for the economy. The OECD emphasizes other values as well. That men should participate in childrearing is not directly related to economic growth: it is more a question of the equal sharing of

opportunities. Thus, the economic language and the presentation of family policy as a solution to so many societal problems must perhaps be understood as a strategy of selling programmatic ideas. And these programmatic ideas, listed above as four main points, are not strictly neo-liberal ones.

If the OECD does not say directly that the Nordic model is to be preferred, their analysis, at least, leaves the clear impression that characteristics of the "social democratic" welfare model are to be recommended. The Nordic countries are presented as best practice providers:

> "There are fewer such recommendations for Sweden and Finland than for Canada and the United Kingdom (Box 1.2). This should be no surprise: Sweden and Finland introduced many family policies before Canada and the United Kingdom, and have long embraced the ideal of having a continuum of supports for parents until children are in their teens. The model involves flexible use of paid parental leave entitlements: affordable high quality childcare and extensive out-of-school hours care in Sweden, and entitlements to reduce working hours for parents with young children" (OECD 2005a: 12).

Still, this does not mean that Nordic countries are not questioned, and *Babies and Bosses* stresses the need for cost control and sustainable policies in several ways. In line with the work-oriented approach of the OECD, cash-for-care benefits are criticized for establishing financial disincentives to work. By using the example of Finand, the OECD, for instance, argues that this benefit is at odds with the aim of increasing female employment rates (OECD 2007c: 113, see also OECD 2005a: 14, 22). Moreover, in both the country specific advice, and in the synthesis report, phrases such as "make work pay", "work incentives" and "reduce barriers to labour market re-entry by mothers", are used to a high degree (OECD 2003a, 2004b). There is a very strong emphasis on financial incentives to work ("no rights without duties", see e.g. OECD 2007c: 98 for an instructive example), and some of the Nordic policies towards lone parents are, for instance, said to be weak in this respect. This quote moderates the impression that Nordic countries are model-countries, by saying that export of policies is difficult (see also OECD 2005a: 12, OECD 2007c: 138):

> "One of the tendencies to which comparative analysts of social policy are particular prone is to call for reforms to make such-and-such a country more like some other country. In family policy during the first decade of the 21st century, the model countries usually held up as deserving of emulation are most often the Nordic countries, especially Denmark and Sweden. There is much in the family policies of these countries worthy of copying, but there are limits to their use as role models. Nordic family policies are expensive. Nordic countries are relatively small, cohesive and egalitarian societies where populations have a high degree of trust in their local governments to deliver high-quality childcare, health and education services. Because of this, they are willing to bear a relatively high tax burden to sustain a universal social policy approach (…). However, electorates in many other OECD countries are not willing to sustain a tax burden of similar magnitude, and ways and means are sought to curtail public spending" (OECD 2007c: 73-74).

Frames

The reason why reconciliation policies are needed, is explained in a similar way as in the ECEC project. Two examples from the 2003 and 2004 reports illustrate this:

> "All three countries (Austria, Ireland, and Japan) covered in this review have experienced changes in female aspirations and labour force behaviour, while at the same time birth rates dropped significantly. For some (potential) parents having children (or having as many as desired) and fulfilling labour market aspirations have been mutually exclusive activities. As a result, current labour supply is less than what it could be, and human capital is underused. This result is not an efficient use of labour market resources, and were this situation to be perpetuated, it will limit economic growth relative to potential. At the same time, the declining number of children also has obvious implications for the shape of future societies" (OECD 2003a: 10).

> Improving the work/family balance is likely to have implications for the shape of future society and the financial sustainability of social protection systems. At the same time, it will reduce concerns about future labour supply. If female employment rates and working hours were to gradually increase over the next 50 years to match male employment rates and working hours, this alone could increase GDP by 15 to 20 percentage points over the same period in New Zealand and Switzerland and half that in Portugal. There are thus good economic reasons for helping mothers to remain in the labour market (OECD 2004b: 26).

The demographic challenge is an important part of the OECD framing activity. In the synthesis report, one chapter is reserved for this topic. Another variant of the argument that reconciliation policies benefit the whole society, is directed less towards societal goals and more specifically towards the private sector: the so called "business case for family-friendly policies" (OECD 2002a: 26, OECD 2003a: 20, OECD 2005a: 28, OECD 2007c: 24).[134] The main thrust of the argument is that firms providing family-friendly working conditions, for instance, flexible working hours, will benefit from this through better motivated employees.

Paradigmatic ideas

The OECD *Babies and Bosses* series to a large extent focuses on employment-oriented goals in combination with many other goals that family-friendly policies are thought to reach:

> "The reconciliation of work and family life is in part a goal in itself. (…) But in fact the reason why the reconciliation of work and family life is increasingly important to so many governments is that it is hoped that getting the right balance will promote all sorts of other goals of society. Increasing aggregate labour supply and employment (so increasing national income); families with more stable and secure sources of income; families better able to stand the strains of modern life, and if relationships do break down, better able to move on in their lives; better child development outcomes; less public expenditures; higher fertility (or at least, enabling families to have their desired number of children) and more gender equity are all often primary governmental objectives" (OECD 2002a: 13, my emphasis).

This view permeates all volumes to a larger extent than the ECEC-review (cf. e.g. 2002: 22, 26). This paradigmatic idea, of mutual reinforcing policy goals, or a win-win strategy, what I referred to as similar to seeing social policy as a productive factor, dominates the reports. It is not difficult to find expressions of this, and the following could serve as one example:

[134] There is a voluminous literature on this topic. Confer for instance Chinchilla and Torres (2006).

> "However, governments have many other reasons to invest in family-friendly policies (…), and policy has to strike a balance between different objectives, including enhancing equity between different income groups, family types, and men and women; promoting child development; underpinning economic growth and ensuring future labour supply; and, supporting the financial sustainability of social protection systems. Although these objectives often reinforce each other, there can be some tension between them, which complicates policy development" (OECD 2005a: 10-11).

Mahon has suggested that *Babies and Bosses* became more occupied with gender equity issues after the feminist scholar Janet Gornick had worked with the OECD for five months in 2003 (2006: 186, footnote 14, cf. also Mahon 2007a: 18, 2007b: 1). The definitional change I discussed in the beginning of section 6.2 could be seen in this light, but as already mentioned, an OECD official, working in the area, says this is not the case. According to Mahon, the new perspective is also partly due to how OECD-officials took over some themes and views from the countries under review. This interpretation supports my claim, in section 6.1, that much of the OECD advice in reality is up-loaded Member State policy.

Summary; comparison between Starting Strong and Babies and Bosses

The overall message of the *Babies and Bosses* series is the following: absence of family-friendly policies will hold back further economic, demographic and social improvements, and threaten the sustainability of existing social protection schemes. This makes family policies crucial and implies that governments should intervene in family life. Other actors, such as private companies, should also take action; there is a business case for family-friendly policies. One could argue that this is a very late discovery of the OECD. The policies it promotes come many decades after women entered the Nordic labour markets. Maybe the impression of a moderated neo-liberal stance can be partly explained by how family policy is a new field of social policy to international organizations, while it has been a national theme for a long time in many European countries.

In line with Mahon (2006), who has compared *Babies and Bosses* with *Starting Strong*, I find that the latter directs more attention towards children and their needs,

and well-being, than the *Babies and Bosses* series. This is also stressed in interviews with OECD officials (OECD interviews 5, 6). In comparison with the *Babies and Bosses* series, the ECEC-reviews have fewer comments on individual countries, and not so many direct policy recommendations. However, what this analysis has uncovered makes it difficult for me to fully agree with Mahon. She claims that, in *Babies and Bosses*, family policy is considered much more instrumental (as a means to reach other goals) than in *Starting Strong* which is more occupied with children's well-being. I disagree for two reasons. First, as I have shown, ideas on the sustainability of the welfare state, family policy as a productive factor, and a focus on employability, are also very much present in *Starting Strong*. Second, both series present Nordic family policy, the welfare regime with the most comprehensive public intervention, as an example to follow within family policy. For example, *Babies and Bosses* focuses on how men should take more part in childrearing. My main conclusion from the analysis of OECD family policy is, therefore, that OECD work is conducted in an economic language, but still contains recommendations that go far beyond the neo-liberal agenda that has traditionally focussed on limited public action and strong individual self-reliance. For instance, the OECD accepts state-funded childcare and asks for increased public spending, a view that is not in line with traditional neo-liberal criticism of the welfare state, and the claim that childcare is a private responsibility. One possible reason why Mahon (2006) and I draw partly different conclusions could be because her analysis does not comprise *Starting Strong* II and *Babies and Bosses* 4 and 5.[135]

Lastly, as discussed in chapter 5 as well, the categories in Campbell's model are not clear cut (this point has been emphasized in other typologies, e.g. by Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 10). One example is ideas as frames, which at least in Campbell's first article are thought to be of normative character. This means that when policy makers are not appealing to feelings or attitudes, but to "objective developments", such as an ageing society, in order to legitimize public intervention in family life, this would not correspond well to frames in Campbell's typology. In my opinion this example is

[135] Two later conference papers by the same author suggest this as they mention a development within Babies and Bosses (Mahon 2007a-b).

clearly framing, what is called a communicative discourse by Schmidt (2002), and should be characterised as such. Campbell's second article seems to suggest this, by opening up for how frames can also be cognitive (2002: 26).

6.2.3 OECD family policy ideas expressed through other documents and sources

The OECD also publishes a working paper series which could be said to contain general policy advice.[136] Although these reports do not necessarily reflect the views of the OECD, they are conducted on request from the OECD, to be used in internal policy development. They seem to reach similar conclusions as do the recommendations in the *Starting Strong* and *Babies and Bosses* series. These studies, of the effect of different family policies like childcare and leave schemes, focus strongly on obstacles to childbearing and fertility rates as well as possible solutions (see e.g. Sleebos 2003, d'Addio and d'Ercole 2005). A paper on child poverty concludes that a combination of benefits and help to get parents into paid employment is important (Whiteford and Adema 2007). Some papers are the result of collaboration between the EU and the OECD (Immervoll and Barber 2005). These working papers show that the OECD undertakes studies of the effect of different family policies like childcare and leave schemes, and thus, at least indirectly, identify "good policies".

Reconciliation of work and family life has also been the topic of the *Employment Outlook*.[137] The reports from 1995 and 2001, in particular focus on this by having a chapter on parental leave and the work family balance (OECD 1995, 2001a). These publications are very much in line with *Babies and Bosses* and *Starting Strong*, but they focus even more strongly on employment issues. The two chapters do not have policy recommendations, but their description and evaluation of national schemes offer indirect advice which is very much in accordance with the policy ideas of *Babies and Bosses* and *Starting Strong*.

[136] Overview of Working Papers: www.oecd.org/els/workingpapers
[137] For an overview of OECD Employment Outlook and downloadable editions from 1989 onwards, see http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en_2649_33927_40774656_1_1_1_1,00.html

An OECD Family database was set up in 2006, and has gradually been extended. It comprises indicators on family outcomes and family policies for all Member States. The database is available on-line through the OECD webpage on family-friendly policies.[138] Information is structured around four broad headings; a) the structure of families, b) the labour market position of families, c) public policies for families and children, and d) child outcomes. The database grew out of the *Babies and Bosses* series, as a wish to continue the project by gathering and disseminating information, even after the fifth and last volume (OECD interview 5). One interviewee also says that future OECD initiatives will focus more on child development in addition to work-family issues. This bears witness to how the organization intends to position itself as an important actor in the international family policy "idea game". The database could serve as a mutual learning tool for family-friendly policies.

Recently, a publication on *Modernising Social Policy for the New Life Course* (OECD 2007d) has added to the OECD´s work on family policy. In this volume, Fagan and Walthery (2007) discuss the role of time policies, understood as parental leave and part-time hours, for reconciliation of care responsibilities. Similar to the *Babies and Bosses* and *Starting Strong*, this article emphasizes the win-win strategy of family-friendly policies.

More OECD work discussing family policy or related themes exists, but what is mentioned here is sufficient to illustrate the ideas disseminated by the OECD.[139] Table 6.1 gives a short overview of the ideas expressed, based mainly on *Babies and Bosses* and *Starting Strong*.

[138] www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database
[139] Mahon (2006, 2007a-b) gives an overview of how the OECD work on family policy has developed. See her papers for references to other OECD-documents.

Table 6.1: Overview of OECD family policy ideas based on Campbell (1998, 2002)

Type of idea	Characteristics and examples
Paradigmatic	Positive towards governmental intervention Family-friendly policies benefit the whole society; family policy as a productive factor
Programmatic	Reconciliation of work and family life; Short, well paid parental leave schemes Provision of childcare from infants to school age Incentives for men to spend time with their children A continuum of support important Cash-for-care benefits are negative (only *Babies and Bosses*)
Frames	Demographic crisis Sustainability of the welfare state

Sources: *Starting Strong* I-II, *Babies and Bosses* volume 1 – 5.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the OECD as an active player in the family policy "idea game". The first conclusion I draw is that the rather comprehensive set of policy ideas promoted by this organization merits an investigation of how countries react to this. The chapter has also contributed to what we know about the development of advice, and the potential impact on national policy-making, by looking into OECD processes for the dissemination of ideas. I have emphasized concrete examples of how the OECD might have an impact on national debates. A second conclusion has been that OECD advice, in reality, is quite influenced by national interests; an understanding the scholarly literature so far has not emphasized strongly enough. I found that whether countries are reviewed and receive family policy recommendations in the first place, to a large extent relies on voluntary participation from the countries in question, and that these reviews are based on financial contributions from participating countries. In other words; you are advised when you ask for it. Combined with what we know from earlier studies about the OECD principle of consensus, allowing those being criticized to comment and sometimes even change the report before it is published (Marcussen

2002), this poses the question of how international so called international advice really is. This finding is based on information conveyed through expert interviews.

Moreover, I have presented OECD work on family policy and discussed its content. This has mainly been based on scrutinizing the two peer reviews *Starting Strong* and *Babies and Bosses*, as well as on interviews. The *Starting Strong* reports are written as a large comparative review and the *Babies and Bosses* as comparisons of three or four countries. The former originates in the Education directorate whereas the latter is based within DELSA. Relying on a framework developed by Campbell (1998, 2002), I have classified the family policy ideas from the reports. This classification has revealed that among the programmatic ideas promoted by the OECD, parental leave schemes and childcare solutions of the Nordic kind enjoy a high degree of OECD support. This is surprising since the OECD is so often considered a neo-liberal organization. Still, this is not the same as saying that the OECD is promoting a Scandinavian welfare state. Regarding ideas as frames, the OECD emphasizes how some family outcomes cause concern (the demographic decline, child poverty), and how the financial sustainability of the welfare state is dependent on the labour supply of parents. The main paradigmatic idea seems to be that family policy can address most of these challenges (productive factor argument). The paradigmatic ideas on which OECD family policy work relies are strongly employment-oriented and focussed on the general benefits such policies provide for the society at large. My third main conclusion is that OECD work on family policy is conducted in an economic language, but still contains recommendations which go beyond the neo-liberal agenda, which has traditionally focussed on limited public action and strong individual self-reliance.

A methodological point, and a possible fourth finding of the chapter (and chapter 5), relates to Campbell's analytical framework in itself. From a methodological point of view it should be noted that his framework is not unproblematic when confronted with a concrete, empirical material, such as policy recommendations from IOs. His categories are not entirely mutually exclusive, and the analysis shows that the distinction between ideas of a normative or cognitive character is not without difficulties.

According to Castles (2004), population ageing is one of the most central topics today. He says that most countries have already focussed on 1) increasing female education, and 2) female employment, to combat low fertility rates. Thus, of the "three-parts-remedy" Castles refers to, "(...) the only task remaining is to get across the message that family-friendly policy is at least part of the answer to slowing down or reversing the extent of fertility decline" (2004: 166). It is in this sense that the OECD may be important; this organization, together with the EU, presented in chapter 5, has the potential of getting this and other family policy messages across borders. To what extent they succeed in this is the topic of the following two chapters.

Chapter 7 Germany and the transmission of family policy ideas[140]

> „(...) we cannot accept to be in the lead regarding childlessness and the one on the bottom across all Europe regarding birth rates and at the same time be the last regarding early childhood care, education and child-raising institutions. Therefore the daycare expansion should have taken place a long time ago„ (former family minister Renate Schmidt, SPD, Bundesrat 2004a: 434).

How has German family policy changed recently and can reforms be attributed to ideational influence of the EU and the OECD, through learning processes initiated by these organizations? Based on official documents, parliamentary debates and interviews with key policy actors at national and international level I ask whether international organizations (IOs) may serve a mediator function providing the knowledge leading to German reforms.

In this chapter I put forward four assumptions. I assume that social policy ideas supported by IOs have greater likelihood of being implemented than ideas not enjoying this support since such organizations both may convince political actors of the need to reform and provide legitimacy for reformers (Marcussen 2002). For instance, Plantenga et al. (2008) claim that EU work on childcare increases national ambitions and strengthens the room of manoeuvre for governments in favour of reform. I thus expect, first, to find at least some concordance between international advice and national policy: The power of ideas is strengthened if they are accepted by and further disseminated by influential international organizations. Second, since the EU has no family policy in the sense of a coherent set of objectives for government activity in this policy area, but rather several policies that affect the situation of families, the influence on Germany is probably not very evident. Although OECD family policy advice is more coherent, this holds also for the OECD, which, according to Zolhnhöfer and Zutavern (2004), is not much referred to in German social policy debates. Third, since the German parental leave and childcare reforms described below

[140] The following chapter draws on the corresponding chapter of a volume on the internationalisation of social policy (Lindén forthcoming 2009).

are presented as extension more than retrenchment of the welfare state, the German government will most likely claim credit for this reform more than make other bodies responsible for the changes. Furthermore, as postulated by ideational theory, policy failure often results in a search for new policies abroad. Politicians confronted with an unsuccessful policy like the former German parental leave scheme, will search for alternatives in politically close environments (Rose 1991). German Christian democrats will thus consult conservative sources. In social terms the EU and OECD are considered restrictive and rather conservative in giving economy priority over social policy and not intervening much in family affairs. My fourth assumption says, therefore, that a reason for the introduction of *Elterngeld* and increase in childcare facilities, which is not what one would expect from a Christian Democratic led coalition government, could be the idea disseminated by international organizations, that such arrangements will have general economic advantages. Accordingly, I expect the government to refer to IOs to strengthen their arguments, as for instance Rickardt (2004) has found regarding childcare.

Focusing on possible external influence, this chapter does not discuss domestic political factors like change of government, nor socioeconomic trends such as ageing, fertility or cultural changes although these of course are important to understand the reforms (cf. chapter 2).

The chapter evolves in four steps: first, EU and OECD recommendations and proposals are depicted. Next, German family policy and recent reforms are described, and reforms and international advice are compared. I then take a closer look at EU and OECD discourse and argumentation in German parliamentary debates on family policy reforms. [141] Lastly I discuss whether reforms can be attributed to German participation in EU and OECD learning processes. The discussion about influence is guided by whether Germany participates in exchange of ideas, timing (whether reforms come soon after advice is issued), similarity in arguments, direct references, and consultation (interviews) of key actors in the process.

[141] Another possible source would be parliamentary debates on NAP/empl or NAP/incl, see Büchs and Friedrich (2005) for a discussion of this. They find, however, that such reports hardly are given explicit consideration, an indication of their status and importance. De la Porte and Pochet (2005: 360) and Zeitlin (2005a: 460) also report that national parliaments are rather uninvolved in OMC-processes. Altogether Büchs and Friedrich find that neither the EES nor the Social Inclusion processes have a direct impact on German policy development.

7.1 Family policy advice from international organizations

It is within childcare that we find the most direct policy advice from IOs. In the framework of the EES (European Employment Strategy) and the Barcelona-targets from 2002, Member States are asked to ensure: „the provision of childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of Age" (Council of the European Union 2002b: 13). Another aim is to achieve an employment rate of at least 60 % for women. EU reports often include overviews of coverage for individual countries ("naming and shaming"). One recent example is the report from the EU Commission on the implementation of the Barcelona targets (European Commission 2008c) from October 2008. Here Germany is shown to have reached the goal for the age group three – mandatory school age, but not for those up to three years.

The focus on childcare is also reflected in the specific employment recommendations for Germany which are rather consistent over time with only minor changes in wording. In the period 2001-2004 the country has been advised to: "review possible tax disincentives to female participation in the labour market; increase childcare facilities, especially in the Western Länder, and improve the correspondence between school schedules and working hours; (…)" (Council of the European Union 2004: 5).

The OECD has specific and coherent recommendations that can easily be identified in a particular chapter of the *Babies and Bosses* reports. Germany is not given systematic treatment in the volumes published before or after the reforms I discuss and thus cannot be directly measured against OECD-advice. I would still argue that the OECD presents views on this country's policy.[142] When OECD-representatives participate in international conferences and meetings, they present overall recommendations very much in line with the recommendations given to countries covered by the *Babies and Bosses* series. OECD officials confirm in interviews that advice is meant to apply to more than the country under review (OECD interview 5). A recent example of this is provided in the OECD-presentation at an

[142] In volume 5, published in 2007 and too late to have influenced the reforms I study, Germany is said to do poorly, e.g. within childcare.

international conference at ministerial level in 2006 (Durand 2006). Here it was suggested to reduce possible disincentives to work in tax-benefit systems, to offer low-cost, high-quality childcare services, provide relative short parental leaves with job guarantees and more family-friendly workplaces.[143] It is explicitly said that there is no universal solution but that such elements are crucial. Concerning childcare, the OECD *Babies and Bosses* series says children under three years and older children, after school, should be given more attention, just like the EU proposes, and policy should make men take more parental leave.

Starting Strong II (2006) is critical towards parental leave benefits such as the German Erziehungsgeld because they are so long that they hinder people (women) returning to work, an issue the EU also focus on (EU Commission/Council 2003: 45). For the same reasons, the OECD is sceptical towards home care allowances.[144] The report proposes to increase public investment in services for young children, especially for the youngest (0-3 years). The *Starting Strong* country note on Germany, written by the OECD based on the country's own background report, stresses how there is already recognition within Germany that childcare must be expanded and public investment increased. The report takes issue with a range of aspects, including training of staff and division of responsibility between states and the federal level, issues that I do not focus on. Moreover, although the report does not give clear advice, it asks whether the legal right to a kindergarten place should be expanded and the parental leave should be "shorter but better paid" (OECD 2004a: 43).

Reports like these have comparisons of national policies and results presented as rankings where Germany comes out as a laggard. In this connection, the *PISA* – study should be mentioned too. According to Leibfried and Martens (2008: 10), the PISA-schock set the agenda in Germany for a long period after the first report was published. This is a good illustration of the possible OECD impact on national public opinion, a mechanism identified by Pagani (2002) and described in chapter 6. Although mainly focusing on education, PISA also resulted in discussions on childcare

[143] Presentation available at http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/26/36939331.pdf
[144] In November 2007, Wilhelm Adema from the OECD presented the fifth volume of the *Babies and Bosses* series in Berlin. Among other things, the OECD in the press conference commended the expansion of day care facilities and the introduction of *Elterngeld*, but criticized the planned *Betreuungsgeld* (FAZ 2007). The *European Alliance for Families*, however, identifies the Finnish cash-for-care benefit as best practice.

institutions and how children could improve their school achievements when having attended pedagogical training from an early age. A quote from the German background report written for the OECD *Starting Strong* II study is illustrative:

> "Agreement has been reached among specialists that early, individual promotion of children is a precondition for successful development processes. This view, which has for a long time been put forward, has found dissemination at political level after the PISA shock. There has never been so much public discussion or so many government initiatives on the question of care, education and child-raising as in recent years. Initiatives however face resistance when it comes to really achieving improvements" (BMFSFJ 2004: 108).

Every 12 – 18 months the OECD publishes *Economic Surveys* on individual countries. This is a kind of regular peer review and these reports have also focused on childcare issues. Reading the German *Economic Survey* summaries partly confirms Kildal and Kuhnle´s investigation of Danish and Norwegian surveys in the period 1990-2000. Kildal and Kuhnle conclude that there are no recommendations or comments on family support policies (2006: 12). And from 1998 to 2002 (OECD 1998a, 1999a, 2001c, 2002b) there is no German family support recommendation. However, in 2004 Germany is advised to move from benefits in cash to benefits in kind within childcare to increase labour supply (OECD 2004c: 5). And in 2006, more financial support for childcare is welcomed to reduce labour force participation obstacles (OECD 2006c: 7). It could be read as a sign that issues from the *Babies and Bosses* series are gradually integrated into the more authoritative *Economic Surveys*.

So, the issue of childcare is treated very explicitly, and the need for provision for infants is emphasized. The EU even identifies targets to be reached within 2010. For parental leave systems, the advice is less direct, but both organizations still express views upon existing systems and identify some kind of best practice for Member States to consider. The EU and OECD are critical towards measures that keep women out of work for longer periods.

In studies, working papers, conferences and EU Presidency initiatives one finds more direct and far-reaching advice than the official position of the EU and OECD. A recent study prepared for the European Commission, for instance, discusses duration

of parental leave, eligibility and remuneration and presents the Swedish father's quota as a good way of making men take more responsibility (Plantenga and Remery 2005).

Table 7.1: International actors´ comments on German family policy since 2001

Scheme/ benefit	OECD	EU
Overall advice	Implement work-friendly family policies	Implement work-friendly family policies
Childcare	Move from benefits in cash to benefits in kind, more financial support for childcare (Economic Survey 2004, 2006) Increase coverage in childcare facilities, particularly for children under three years of age (Babies and Bosses 2002-2007, Starting Strong II 2006, Starting Strong II country note 2004)	Increase coverage in childcare facilities, particularly for children under three years of age (Employment recommendations, Barcelona targets 2002, Plantenga and Remery 2005)
Parental leave	Well paid and job-protected parental leave of about one year (Starting Strong 2001) Erziehungsgeld (child rearing benefit) too long (Babies and Bosses 2002-2007, Starting Strong 2001, 2006) Incentives for men to care for their children (Babies and Bosses 2002-2007)	Well paid parental leave schemes. Equal sharing of caring responsibilities (Plantenga and Remery 2005, European Commission 2006b)
Cash-for-care allowance	No specific advice for Germany, but express worries about cash-for-care allowances that keep woman out of work for long periods and that hinder the integration of children, particular from immigrant families	Contradictory view: express worries about policies that keep woman out of work for long periods (EU Commission/ Council 2003), but refers to cash-for-care allowances as good practice (the European Alliance for Families).

In sum, this review of the proposals, guidelines and actual recommendations at EU level illustrates that the EU encourages its Member States to develop family-friendly policies. There is a discourse on reconciliation of work and family life which seems to dominate most documents and processes, emphasizing in particular the importance of childcare and parental leave schemes (work-friendly family policy). The focus is on how such policies will increase employability, is favourable to economic growth and sustainability of the welfare state and less on the needs of families. Reports often include comparisons of national policies, e.g. in the form of tables displaying childcare coverage, parental leave benefit periods and female employment rates. Similarly, the OECD issues country specific recommendations through *Starting Strong* and *Babies and Bosses* and more general recommendations through other publications

and conferences. The OECD addresses the field more directly than the EU in the sense that it has reviews focussing exclusively on family policy. The same discourse on reconciliation of work and family life, however, is present in both IOs. Their reports also have comparisons of national policies and results presented as rankings. This discourse is so strongly integrated at the EU and OECD level that it merits a closer inspection of possible influence on national policies. I turn to this now.

7.2 German family policy and recent reforms

In the discussion I treat Germany as one country. However, Germany is more than one country for two reasons. First, until two decades ago, Germany was divided in West and East and the two states had a very different approach to family policy which still has consequences for family policy. The regional differences in childcare coverage is one example, citizens´ opinion towards public versus individual responsibility is another. Second, Germany is a federal state where the 16 *Bundesländer* have important competences within family policy. For instance, they are responsible for provision, finance and administration of childcare (Evers, Lewis and Riedel 2005: 197), and the states have been sceptical towards EU initiatives that challenge their competences (Büchs and Hinrich 2007: 21). The German family ministry has always had limited competences and the federal government limited decision-making authority in the field (Kaufmann 2002: 463, 465). This means that family policy programmes vary a lot from state to state (Kaufmann 2002: 465). [145] This does not mean, however, that the federal government does not have an important role in the field of childcare. It does for instance support the states with extra funding when working towards the current extension of childcare facilities. Evers, Lewis and Riedel (2005:197-198) argue that the federal government has got gradually more responsibility within childcare.

Esping-Andersen (1990) refers to Germany as a conservative welfare regime where the principle of subsidiarity makes the family and church important producers

[145] Cf. Dienel (2002: 222) or Gerlach (2004: 123) for an overview of how the federal and the state level share responsibility for family policy measures in Germany (exclusive vs competing legislation). For a presentation of the family policy of former West and East Germany, see e.g. Federkeil (1997) and Wendt (1997). For more information on German family policy, cf. Schulz (1998), Kaufmann (2002), Dienel (2002), Gerlach (2004) or Ostner and Schmitt (2008).

of welfare while the state is less active. Other main characteristics are the financing through social contributions and the preserving of status differentials. Several researchers have challenged his typology (cf. chapter 2). Lewis and Ostner (1995) present an alternative categorization of welfare regimes based on the gender division of work and the strength of the male breadwinner/family wage model. In their typology Germany is a strong male breadwinner country. Here women are dependent wives with regard to social entitlements: the level of female labour market participation is low, women are caretakers and rely on their husbands´ employment for welfare benefits. The Scandinavian countries represent the opposite, as weak male breadwinner countries. Here women are treated as workers more than wives and mothers, and the level of female labour market participation is high. Leitner claims that welfare states like Germany, called explicit familialistic in her categorization, have scarce public and private provision of services and leaves much to the family (2003: 357). Also, parental leave periods are long, parental benefits low, incentives for shared parenting few and the financial dependence of women high (2003: 370). These descriptions do not fit the situation in the last decade entirely, as women increasingly take part in paid work (development towards a dual breadwinner model) (Lewis 2001, 2006b, Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser 2004).

However, regardless of classification scheme, Germany is considered a country where men work while many women stay home to take care of the children, especially during the first years, and the use of public childcare for smaller children is uncommon, although there are substantial regional differences. Women often work part-time.[146] Against this background the recent German reforms involve major changes. Here I will describe the reforms to enable a comparison with the EU and OECD suggestions and recommendations depicted in section 7.1.

The black-red coalition taking office in 2005 introduced a new parental leave benefit (Deutscher Bundestag 2006d). This parental leave, called *Elterngeld*, replaces the earlier *Erziehungsgeld*, a parental upbringing allowance, with a 14 months long

[146] Norwegian women also work much part-time. However, Germany is one of the EU countries where most women work part-time due to family reasons (Eurostat 2005; 2, Pfau-Effinger 2008: 197). German kindergartens are for instance often open only parts of the working day. And among European women working part-time, German women have the shortest weekly working hours while Norwegian women have relatively high weekly working hours (22.2 vs. 17.9 hours) (SSB 2005).

benefit granting parents 67 percent of net salary (minimum 300, maximum 1800 € per month). Under the earlier *Erziehungsgeld* it was possible to take three years leave (two years paid) with a means tested upper benefit level limit of 300 € a month, meaning that the benefit was not coupled to previous earnings and that no former employment record was needed. The change to a wage-dependent benefit is actually more in accordance with the principle of status maintenance than the former means-tested, poverty-focused benefit.[147] Those without a work record will receive the minimum sum of 300 €.

Clearly inspired by Scandinavian experiences, especially Swedish, two months of the new leave are reserved for the partner who does not stay at home for the rest of the period. Should he or she choose not to make use of this right, the parental benefit will be reduced accordingly. This is an incentive for shared parenting (lone parents will get 14 months). The use of parental leave benefits to change the attitude and behaviour of parents (fathers) is new. The main change of the reform is the focus on a dual earner and dual-carer model (table 7.2).

The *Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz* (TAG, law on the extension of day care) has been in force since 1.1.2005 and is supposed to increase care facilities places, particularly for smaller children. The need for better infrastructure is highest in the former West Germany, where coverage for the youngest children are very low: less than 3 percent in the West, almost 40 percent in the East (Deutscher Bundestag 2004h: 23). The TAG will result in 230 000 new places by 2010, but no numbers for coverage in percent is given. A more recent reform initiative known as the *Kinderförderungsgesetz* (KiföG, bill on a further expansion of childcare) goes further in promising a 35 percent coverage rate for children aged 1-3 within 2013 as well as a legal right to a place in childcare (see section 7.3.3). These reforms represent value change as the state becomes much more involved in care. The reforms increases de-familisation, implying that individual's reliance on their family is reduced (Esping-Andersen 1999: 45), and promotes a dual earner, dual carer model as opposed to a "traditional gendered division of labour" (Lewis et al. 2008: 269).

[147] Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser (2004) argue that the German welfare state has changed and now to a lesser degree guarantees the achieved living standard of workers. The *Elterngeld* partly contradicts this by seeking to secure the former living standard.

The reforms must be said to be very close to advice from IO. The parental leave period is made shorter and better paid, and incentives for fathers to care for their children are increased. The provision of childcare facilities is extended and the age group 1-3 is given priority. Germany has not been part of all international reviews referred to in this and earlier chapters, but the reforms are in concordance with policy ideas of EU and OECD reports and recommendations. Some of the reports, e.g. *Babies and Bosses* 5, however, are published so late compared with the timing of the German reforms that one must question whether they could have any impact.

Table 7.2 Main characteristics of old and new parental leave scheme

	Erziehungsgeld	**Elterngeld**
Main beneficiaries	All residents treated equally	People with employment record
Monthly amount	Means tested (upper limit 300 €)	Wage-dependent (67 % of net salary, minimum 300 €, maximum 1800 €)
Time off	3 years (2 years paid)	14 months
Father quota	-	2 months
View on division of labour within the family	Male breadwinner, female caregiver	Dual earner, dual carer (gender equality)

In the discussion of how much of the coming *Elterngeld* and other reforms which can be explained by participation in EU and OECD learning processes, one should have a look at what has been the traditional policy of the parties in government. To do this I turn to party programmes. If international organizations are to be attributed an important influence then the parties must have a) changed their mind b) on the basis of EU/OECD discourse.

The coalition that gained power in Germany in the autumn of 2005 consists of the social democratic SPD, the conservative CDU and its Bavarian sister party CSU. In the party programme from 2005, the CDU and CSU emphasize the importance of

tax exemptions and childcare institutions to enable parents to reconcile work and family life. There is no reference to the later *Elterngeld* initiative. The programme of the SPD paints a different picture. Here *Elterngeld* is described and there is also a focus on building more childcare institutions where children under three are given priority (SPD 2005: 46). The SPD and the Greens worked on a reform in 2004, which would have introduced an earnings-related, *Elterngeld* similar programme, but it met little support with the Christian Democrats (Hausding 2006).[148] In other words, the party programme of the SPD is much closer to both German family policy of today and the proposals of the EU and OECD (see below). Going back to the SPD party programme of 2002 I find a similar focus on childcare, all day schools and tax incentives as in 2005 (SPD 2002: 47, 48), but *Elterngeld* is not mentioned.

It is beyond any doubt that today's policy introduced under the CDU-Family Minister von der Leyen is different from the traditional German family policy – especially for the Christian Democrats. The reforms described above move Germany from a strong family-centred welfare regime, which mainly compensates the costs of parenting, towards a weaker family-centred welfare regime, where the state takes responsibility for parental leave systems and encourages provision of childcare services (de-familisation). The transfer heavy housewife model, where the family is seen as the primary provider of social services, is no longer the ideal and the scepticism to state interference in private matters is severely reduced. In contrast to what ideational or path dependency theory suggest, the German reforms are inspired by the policies of a different welfare (Scandinavian) regime rather than countries with more similar policies (Simmons and Elkins 2004, Büchs 2006). Field experts have called for a study of the reasons behind the change in family policy position within the German political parties (Ostner 2006), and research on countries experiencing substantial reforms (Leitner 2003). I will address this from the perspective of supranational policy advice. I now turn to how the government justifies the reforms by mainly investigating parliamentary debates. I discuss childcare, parental leave and cash-for-care reforms seperately.

[148] See e.g. the speech by former family minister Renate Schmidt from 11.11.2004 or the parliamentary debate from 9.9.2004 (Deutscher Bundestag 2004i) as examples of how the former red-green government was preparing a parental leave reform.

7.3 EU and OECD discourse and German argumentation

7.3.1 Daycare Expansion Act (TAG; Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz)

How do the German reforms relate to the EU and OECD discourse on reconciliation of work and family life? As I have shown, the EU is most specific in its view on childcare facilities. Both the country specific recommendations for Germany and the Joint Reports on Social Inclusion by the Council and Commission (2002, 2004b) emphasize the need for more places. The German government's aim of increasing care facilities is supposed to be reached within 2010, which is the same year as the EU says, so here there is correspondence between aims, and also measure, since this aim can only be reached through building new facilities. As stated above, the OECD expresses similar opinions as the EU on childcare, so Germany here acts in concordance with this organization's advice as well. The move from benefits in cash to benefits in kind, expressed by the strong focus on childcare, is also in line with the EU/OECD discourse. Like the two IOs, the German government focuses on coverage for children under three years of age.

Parliamentary debates, however, reveal that politicians rarely take the Barcelona targets or other EU and OECD set aims as their point of departure when discussing the extension of childcare.[149] This is in line with my second assumption, saying that influence would not be very evident. The debates are, however, full of statements of how Germany is a laggard when it comes to offering childcare, illustrated here by two quotes from family minister Schmidt;

> "We are not only the bottom one in Europe regarding the fertility rate, but also regarding care, education and child-raising institutions" (Renate Schmidt, SPD, Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11194).

[149] Lewis et al. (2008: 269) still argue that the recent extension of childcare provision is done to meet EU targets.

> "I am convinced: we will succeed in changing West-Germany's position as a developing country regarding childcare, and in maintaining the good provision in East Germany" (Renate Schmidt, SPD, Deutscher Bundestag 2004m: 12282).

The actual bill is similar in this respect; "Also in an international comparison, Germany is limping after the development in comparable industrialised countries. In Germany, childcare is an area in which considerable need for modernisation exists" (Deutscher Bundestag 2004h: 24). This seems very much in line with what Kettunen has observed in Finland where "the notion of Finland as a latecomer served as an argument for social reforms demands" (2006: 58). As Kettunen argues, international comparisons may be crucial for agenda setting and the production and transmission of knowledge (2006: 32). While Heclo more than three decades ago could state that international comparisons were rare (1974: 8), they are today referred to in public debate all the time.

German debates are abounding of references to international comparisons and league tables. However, when German MPs make these international references, it is either to individual countries, most often Scandinavian countries and France, or to international comparisons within education; PISA, TIMSS (Trends in Mathematics and Science Study) or PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study). The EU is barely mentioned. Scandinavian countries and France are used by MPs from different parties to argue both in favour of and against the TAG-reform. Several MPs consider family policy as bringing about many general benefits for the society in large and say that with reference to Scandinavia or make similar arguments (e.g. Christel Humme and Caren Marks, both SPD, Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11202 and 11208). International experiences are, however, also used to claim that the TAG-reform is insufficient. Maria Eichhorn, CDU/CSU, argues that French family policy illustrates that cash benefits are important and that such policies must be further developed in German (Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11204). Although the debate is on childcare, Maria Böhmer, also CDU/CSU, argues that it is wrong to take the Swedish parental leave scheme as evidence that generous leaves result in higher birth rates since the Swedish fertility rate has decreased substantially lately, approaching the German level (Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11196).

The second way of making international references, the references to the OECD PISA study and other school studies, emphasizes how one important argument for the extension of childcare is education. For instance, Klaus Haupt, a politician from the Free Democratic Party (FDP), argues like this:

> "One of the most dramatic results of the most recent comparative studies is for me the fact that in Germany more than in any other country the social background decides life and future opportunities for children. We are neglecting early childhood education, thus social inequalities and curtail the future of our children" (Deutscher Bundestag 2004m: 12296).

Such references to PISA and the emphasis on education are also highly present in interviews with key policy actors in Germany (German interviews 2, 4, 6, 7). And results from the PISA, TIMSS or PIRLS are used by the opposition when presenting suggestions or questions to the parliament (e.g. Antrag Deutscher Bundestag 2004f, Antrag Deutscher Bundestag 2004c). There are other references to the OECD in parliamentary debates, and sometimes it is unclear which OECD report the MP is referring to. At least in some cases it looks like the second *Starting Strong* report, but I cannot conclude with certainty (e.g. Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11194, Deutscher Bundestag 2004c: 2-3). An application by the SPD-Grünen government from 2004 on expansion of different forms of childcare encourages all political parties to work towards an implementation of the OECD´s advice for Germany in *Starting Strong* (Deutscher Bundestag 2004a: 5). This is the most explicit reference to the report of an IO I have found.[150]

The TAG-bill is also justified with other arguments than education and reduction of social inequality among children. Family minister Schmidt (SPD) is concerned with how German family policy is comprehensive, but with modest improvements and results. This is in her opinion much because of the stress on cash benefits rather than services, which she considers to be the responsibility of the Conservatives: "We are spending more money than others and are still less successful

[150] The German government is asked to „make the results of the OECD study „Starting Strong" for Germany available for the German Bundestag and to help the Länder, municipalities and providers of services in the implementation of the OECD recommendations" (Deutscher Bundestag 2004a: 5).

because we have focused too much on benefits in kind and too little on extending infrastructure" (Deutscher Bundestag 2004m: 12283).

As the literature on ideas assumes, feedback about existing programmes and the failure to meet goals increase the probability for a new idea to gain influence. The inability to reduce social inequalities, a very low fertility rate combined with low female employment rates and inadequate gender equality, are all examples of "failure" referred to by German politicians. This failure is particularly alarming since spending is so high.

In the justification of the increase in childcare facilities there is also, as in the publications of IOs, a very clear presence of the idea of family policy as a productive factor. "Family yields profit" (Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11193), says Renate Schmidt and her colleague Christel Humme justifies the bill by saying that it will improve Germany's competitiveness by making female human capital available and improving education and the skills of children (Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11202). Two further quotes illustrate this idea;

> "Research proves that the rate of return for every Euro spent for small children is above average. Motivated and well-educated workers constitute a benefit for each firm. The potential of well-educated young men and women should be exploited. Childcare and early education are a locational advantage, both in international comparisons and between municipalities. That means economic growth. That is active economic policy, (...)" (Caren Marks, SPD, Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11208).

> "The benefit of childcare facilities and childminders for the economy is similarly underrated. Substantial income and savings are to be expected for public budgets if mothers wanting to can work due to a better infrastructure of childcare. Second, positions in the area of childcare facilities are created and within childminding persons become self-employed. Third, with a better infrastructure of childcare lone parents formerly dependent on social assistance can work. In West Germany, 70 percent of non-working mothers with children up to 12 years wants to work. They fail because of insufficient childcare provision. If we improve reconciliation of work and family life we can increase the female employment rate and influence the development of births positively through improved conditions for families. An increased female employment rate and positive development of births have immediate effects on the social security schemes. Just the increased female employment rate to the level of our

> Scandinavian neighbours would reduce the problems due to the demographic development of the pay-as-you-go financed pensions insurance substantially" (Deutscher Bundestag 2004c: 2, Antrag FDP).

However, there are some critical remarks from Christian Democratic politicians who where then in opposition. Maria Flachsbarth, CDU/CSU, criticizes how children are often seen as future workers and tax payers rather than as children (Deutscher Bundestag 2004m: 12301, cf. Lister´s (2006, 2008) critique on how children are valued as "becomings" rather than "beings"). Maria Eichhorn, CDU/CSU, is worried that the focus on childcare is more due to employment-political objectives than for the well-being of children (Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11203). As we will see in section 7.3.3 and the next chapter on Norway, a Christian Democratic priority would be too ensure freedom of choice by granting families more benefits in cash and tax reductions. According to Eichhorn, the French family policy is successful precisely because it provides this. It should also be said that although both the CDU/CSU and FDP voted against the TAG, they several times stressed how they were in favour of the content of the reform, but that they thought that it was too imprecise on funding. Also, the Conservatives were stressing the benefit of *Tagespflege*, or childminding, more than the government. The argument was that in addition to childcare provision through institutions, the state should work for an extension of care by childminders who provide care for children, usually at home, while the child's parents are at work, as an alternative to care in an institution. A result of the TAG is that childminders (*Tagespflegepersonen*) are increasingly professionalized (demands of pedagogical qualifications, skills in first aid etc). However, the *Betreuungsgeld*, a cash-for-care benefit recently legislated in Germany and discussed in section 7.3.3, was not proposed by the Christian Democrats then.[151] Apart from this, the debate on childcare

[151] One possible explanation for this is that until 1.1.2007 the German *Erzieuhungsgeld* (child-rearing benefit) functioned partly as a cash-for-care allowance by allowing parents to stay home for the first three years after birth. Erziehungsgeld is not quite the same as the *Betreuungsgeld* which is currently discussed, but it has similarities (cf. Morgan and Zippel 2003). Yet another reason why Betreuungsgeld has not been higher on the agenda could be that the German efforts to extend childcare provision have included both care in institutions (Kindertageseinrichtungen) and in private homes (Tagesmütter/-väter). As we know from Norwegian experiences with *kontantstøtte*, quite a few parents chose to use the cash for care benefit to buy private care from childminders. As the German government has promoted this for some time, the availability of childminders, who are controlled by the government at least to some extent, might have reduced the wish and need for a

is in many respects characterised by consensus since all parties wish to extend childcare.

Plantenga et al. (2008: 40-42) say that the Barcelona targets raise the level of ambition and political relevance of childcare. Richardt claims that the Barcelona targets "strengthens the federal governments demand for more macroeconomic investments and the position of the federal government vis-à-vis the states" (2004: 42). If this is correct we should find references to the EU in parliamentary debates, in particular in the debates on competing competences where some *Länder* have argued that the federal level is exceeding its competence. However, I find no such references. In the two debates in Bundesrat before the TAG-reform was accepted (Bundesrat 2004a-b) family minister Schmidt justifies the federal initiative e.g. by saying that Germany needs to catch up with the rest of Europe and that the government's bill does not exceed their competence. Neither the Barcelona targets nor the individual recommendations issued by the EU to Germany are mentioned by Schmidt or other speakers.

It is still possible that IOs have increased the scope of action available for national actors. Leibfried and Martens (2008) argue for *PISA* and the field of education that OECD reviews may *nationalise* a field in the meaning that a field for which the states are responsible is lifted to the national level. Leibfried and Martens show how the German *Länder* lost de facto competence on education through OECD reviews which identified problems, best practices, a need for action and initiated a continuous debate on quality. This fits the family policy field well: the German government has taken several initiatives within childcare which challenge the competence of the individual Länder.

Since the TAG-reform was legislated two years after the setting of EU Barcelona targets one might expect to find references to the EU as a way of gaining authority. As already said, there are no such references. However, as the TAG was expected to reach something between 17-21 percent coverage by 2010 (Deutscher Bundestag 2008c: 10),[152] that is not even close to the 33 percent goal of the EU,

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Betreuungsgeld since an alternative to childcare facilities was already there. The cost connected to the introduction of such a scheme might also have hindered the CDU/CSU in proposing it.

[152] See also Deutscher Bundestag 2008b: 6.

lacking references are perhaps not so surprising after all. It would have been to justify the reform by referring to a goal one did not have expectations of reaching.

Summing up, the TAG-reform was to a large extent justified by presenting Germany as a laggard. This was done by referring to international comparisons, successful countries (Scandinavia, France) or education studies. Both the government and the opposition relied on this strategy. Other references to the EU or OECD are more or less absent. In addition to the laggard-argument, the expected general benefits provided by an expansion of public childcare (the productive factor argument), and the education argument, are used a lot. As shown in earlier chapters, these arguments are stressed by IOs.

7.3.2 Elterngeld

The EU and OECD call upon Member States to review their parental leave schemes and look at how they hamper women in returning to work. IOs are less specific in their advice in this area than for childcare and thus it is more difficult to judge whether the German response corresponds to an EU/OECD measure. However, reports from IOs recommend parental leave benefits of about one year with incentives for men to go on leave. Moreover, research initiated by IOs identifies parental leave schemes of the new German type as beneficial. Also, German position papers justify the Elterngeld-reform partly by reference to low female employment rates, a problem stressed by the EU and OECD. This could therefore be a result of learning.

How does the German government argue for their bill on *Elterngeld*? The bill starts out by claiming that the former *Erziehungsgeld* (childrearing benefit) did not fulfil the goals of today: Too few fathers take time off to care for their children, too many mothers stay out of work for a long period, and nor does the fertility rate seem to be positively influenced. The *Elterngeld*-programme is introduced to address these problems. The government expects that more men will stay home to care for their children, that women will return to work earlier and, though not explicitly said in the bill, more children will be born.

As in the parliamentary debates on childcare, there are very few references to IOs in the debates on Elterngeld. The EU Commission is mentioned once, having encouraged EU members to promote equality (Deutscher Bundestag 2006e: 3725). There are no references to the OECD or its family policy studies. The study most often referred to is the Seventh Family Report, a national study I return to below. As the literature on ideas suggests, and as seen in the TAG-reform process, policy failure is a point of departure for the bill: „Although Germany is in the upper third among European countries regarding benefits in cash, these benefits comparatively have not had satisfying effects" (Deutscher Bundestag 2006d: 1). This view is also very present in the speeches of the MPs from both opposition and government (Deutscher Bundestag 2006e: 3711, 3721, 3731, 3732, 3734, 3738, Deutscher Bundestag 2006h: 5364, 5372). Germany has very many programmes directed at families with children and spends a lot of money on such programmes. This problem is often described in combination with a reference to other countries where the outcome is better than in Germany. The following statement from one FDP MP may serve as an example: "Although we in Germany spend and provide more than 100 billion Euro on family policy benefits, we have one of the lowest birth rates in Europe" (Ina Lenke, FDP, Deutscher Bundestag 2006e: 3711).[153] There are some references to individual countries and Scandinavia is said to have been a model for the *Elterngeld* (Deutscher Bundestag 2006e: 3731). The father quota is expected to be successful as it has been in Sweden (Deutscher Bundestag 2006d: 17).[154] Family minister von der Leyen uses experiences from West and Northern Europe to argue that the new parental leave scheme will result in higher gender equality and less child poverty (Deutscher Bundestag 2006h: 5354, see also Caren Marks, SPD, page 5360, or Jürgen Kucharczyk, SPD, page 5369, in the same debate). However, opposition politicians also refer to Sweden (Deutscher Bundestag 2006e: 3716, 3725, Deutscher Bundestag

[153] Actually, this combination of high spending and modest results has made the current family minister von der Leyen initiate an evaluation of all family policy measures in Germany by a group of experts referred to as *Kompetenzzentrum für familienbezogene Leistungen*. According to the ministry there exist some 153 different benefits regarding family and marriage.

[154] The current German government refers explicitly to Swedish policies when reforming the parental leave scheme and childcare system. Several scholars describe the Elterngeld-reform as heavily influenced by Scandinavian models and Sweden in particular (e.g. Klammer and Letablier 2007: 675, 687, Schiller and Kuhnle 2007: 82, 2008: 90, Knijn and Ostner 2008: 99, Lewis et al. 2008: 269, Ostner and Schmitt 2008: 9).

2006h: 5368) or France when criticising certain aspects of the new scheme (Deutscher Bundestag 2006e: 3736). The idea of family policy as productive factor is definitely present (e.g. Deutscher Bundestag 2006e: 3731, 3733, 3734, Bundesrat 2006: 335, 337, Deutscher Bundestag 2006h: 5354).

The issue of fertility and increased birth rates as an official aim of family policy is controversial in Germany due to its experiences during the Nazi-period. Pro-natalism and the way policy was used to promote certain types of families make it difficult to discuss family policy as a population policy measure. In the draft of the *Elterngeld* reform it is not said explicitly that the new scheme will result in increased birth rates. In the parliamentary debates, however, several politicians both express their concern for the very low birth rates, as does the draft, and in addition they say that the new law will contribute to more births (e.g. MP Ole Schröder, CDU/CSU, Deutscher Bundestag 2006e: 3734).[155] It is also said that this increase will help meeting the demographic challenge where fewer and fewer citizens finance more and more pensioners. In this respect the *Elterngeld* reform is a way of increasing the sustainability of the German welfare state; an argument with an instrumental approach to family policy.

Actually, the family policy during the red-green government has been referred to as exactly sustainable family policy (*Nachhaltige Familienpolitik*). Sustainable family policy is very similar to what I have referred to as family policy as a productive factor in the chapters on the EU and OECD. According to Henninger, Wimbauer and Dombrowski (2008: 6), two reports ordered by family minister Renate Schmidt (Rürup and Gruescu 2003, Bertram, Rösler and Ehlert 2005) started the debate on sustainable family policy in Germany. Key aims are increased birth rates and female labour market participation. As Leitner, Ostner and Schmitt explain, sustainable family policy "conceives of children as society's future assets; it seeks to encourage childbearing by supporting parents to balance work and family responsibilities, and attempts to reduce child poverty by increasing maternal employment" (2008: 175). As a matter of fact, the focus on family-friendly policies by IOs may be one reason why population issues are now less difficult to address in Germany. The way Leitner,

[155] Henninger et al. reaches the same conclusion (2008: 10).

Ostner and Schmitt interpret it; “Not until the OECD and the EU published reports that also tackled ´fertility` issues and their relation to issues of women’s educational attainment and employment was the term ´fertility` introduced into German public debate” (2008: 181). However, the two national reports ordered by the family ministry may be just as important. Together with the Seventh Family Report, they constitute three sources which were probably important for German politicians. Interviews with a SPD MP working on family policy matters and a member of the group writing the Seventh Family Report support this (German interview 2, 6). These three reports seem to argue in a similar manner as EU and OECD reports. The report by Rürup and Gruescu (2003) is particularly economically oriented in its argumentation. All three are comparative and to large extents identify Nordic countries as providing best practice. There are some references to the OECD (e.g. Bertram et al. 2005: 17, 37). They all recommend introducing an *Elterngeld* scheme and providing more childcare facilities. This may be the reason why German politicians in parliamentary debates rely on similar arguments as the OECD and EU without referring to these IOs; they know national studies better.

As stated in the 2004 Joint Report on social inclusion, all NAPs acknowledge the importance for families of managing the balance between work and family life (European Commission and Council 2004b: 36). Several measures that could be useful to achieve this are mentioned: extension of childcare facilities, provision of financial support for families with young children, flexible or part-time working arrangement and a review of parental leave and maternity schemes (2004b: 52). The German bill argues in the same way and explicitly says that a new law on parental leave is only one of three important parts within family policy. Equally important are childcare institutions and a family-friendly working life.

The bill is remarkably free of references to any source to legitimate the expected outcomes. The most specific reference is to „international experiences“ and countries like Sweden allegedly showing that *Elterngeld* similar arrangements result in higher fertility rates and more active men in child caring. There is no particular mentioning of the EU, OECD, national research centres or other sources which could have strengthened the argument. This seems to be in concordance with an analysis by

Zohlnhöfer and Zutavern, saying that the OECD is rarely referred to as justification for changes and that the OECD impact on German welfare reforms therefore cannot have been comprehensive (2004: 137). Henninger et al. conclude that ”adaptation to EU standards was not a dominant topic in the recent reform debate” (2008: 20). I agree, and as my second assumption said, neither EU nor OECD advice figure prominently in reform justifications.

Still, there may be several reasons for this lack of references. That the government is unaware of such sources must be considered highly unlikely and this is also disproved in interviews. More probable and in line with my third assumption, the government expects to gain popularity through this reform and thus does not credit other sources. Also, the reference to Sweden instead of the EU could be explained by the fact that Sweden has a very generous parental leave scheme. This is known among researchers and probably also among journalists, other opinion formers and large parts of the public. Yet another plausible explanation is the exchange of ideas between political (Social Democratic) parties or countries. Bilateral relations could account for just as much as the EU or OECD, perhaps even more, and should be investigated. A publication of the family ministry called *Monitor Familienforschung* provides further evidence of this as it considers German family policy in light of experiences in other countries and states that “Germany follows the Swedish ideal” (BMFSFJ 2006a: 8, my translation).

The following interesting quote from the Family Minister Ursula von der Leyen may illustrate how a foreign idea works in the German context:

> “Looking at countries like Sweden, where Elterngeld was introduced about ten years ago, one must note that childcare facilities also were very incomplete. Only the Elterngeld and the connected discussion has given the necessary push towards a comprehensive expansion of childcare facilities, and we all know who is primary responsible for that. It was very interesting to observe in the last weeks and months, how this discussion in the meantime has also started here and with full intensity. It is no longer discussed whether we need childcare facilities at all, but instead only how and when we can offer this to all children” (Deutscher Bundestag 2006e: 3712).

As discussed in the theory chapter, convincing policy ideas are sometimes able to speed up a reform process by allowing policy makers to jump over the stage of persuading people of the need for action and go straight to the stage on how it should be done. This is exactly how von der Leyen describes the effect of the idea of a new parental leave scheme.

In sum, the Elterngeld-reform like the TAG-reform was justified by the need to catch up with more successful countries. References to the EU and OECD are not present to a high degree. The productive factor is important, but not as often used as for the TAG-reform.

7.3.3 Further expansion of childcare and the cash-for-care benefit

This chapter is about the reforms on childcare (TAG) from 2004 and Elterngeld from 2006. However, some recent developments, which shed light on both of these reforms, as well as on the possible influence of IOs, should be discussed briefly. The bill on a further expansion of childcare, the Kinderförderungsgesetz (KiföG), has relevance for my research questions. The federal government guarantees funding for this expansion (Henninger, Wimbauer and Dombrowski 2008, cf. the Kinderbetreuungsfinanzierungsgesetz – KBFG). Since the bill at the time of writing has only just been accepted by parliament and met the approval of the Bundesrat (November 2008), a full analysis is impossible. The following discussion must thus be considered tentative and incomplete and the data on which I draw is also not very comprehensive.

The bill is about speeding up and increasing the expansion of childcare associated with the TAG reform of 2004. This reform was supposed to result in 230 000 new places by 2010, in different later documents said to equal something like a 17- 21 percent coverage rate for children aged less than three years. The KiföG reform will result in more places, reaching in total a coverage rate of 35 percent by 2013. As part of this reform package the legal right to a childcare place will be given to all children from 1 - 6 years in 2013. This right is now restricted to the age group 3 - 6.

Moreover, this reform introduces a cash-for-care benefit (*Betreuungsgeld*). However, it is not quite clear what kind of a benefit this is.[156]

This reform is interesting for several reasons. First, the further expansion of childcare underlines the paradigmatic change which has taken place in Germany of promoting public childcare. Second, the new aim of 35 percent coverage is very close to the EU set Barcelona target from 2002, although with a delay of three years. Third, the introduction of a cash-for-care benefit is explicitly against the advice of the OECD, but in accordance with the best practice identified in the *European Alliance for Families*, initiated by the German Presidency in 2007. It is also in line with the reintroduction of such a scheme in Sweden and both Norway and Finland have similar schemes. Still, it is a policy instrument which partly contradicts the aim of the reforms on childcare and parental leave which explicitly have tried to increase female employment participation by reducing the period parents stay home to care for their children.

Are the now corresponding national and international childcare provision goals making MPs and the government relying on the EU to justify further extension? It is not. There is one reference to the Lisbon-strategy in the debates on the new law, but it is not explicitly about childcare (Caren Marks, SPD, Deutscher Bundestag 2008d: 17194). The same goes for the OECD and a reference to *Starting Strong* (Deutscher Bundestag 2008d: 17195). The *European Alliance for Families* is never mentioned.

The bill is imprinted with the idea of family policy as a productive factor, able to solve many societal goals. The language is rather economical, saying for instance that offering the childcare coverage people ask for is central for German competitiveness:

> "Only common standards across the country enable the mobility expected from parents in today's working life. Therefore, an offer of qualified childcare meeting demand all over the

[156] The bill formulates it like this: "From 2013 a monthly payment, for instance a cash-for-care benefit, will be introduced for parents who do not want to or cannot let their children be cared for in a day care institution" (Deutscher Bundestag 2008c: 3). The bill focuses mainly on childcare and *Betreuungsgeld* is only mentioned twice in the draft. Amount and eligibility criteria are not specified. This means for instance that we do not know whether parents receiving *Betreuungsgeld* will be allowed to work and buy private care, as it is possible to do in Norway, or whether parents have to stay home themselves like Finnish recipients must.

> Federal Republic of Germany is a central prerequisite for the attractiveness of Germany as an industrial location in today's globalised economy" (Deutscher Bundestag 2008c: 12).

Since family policy to a large extent is a responsibility of individual states in Germany, there exist many regional differences. The coverage rate for childcare for children under three years is perhaps the most well known, varying for instance between more or less full coverage in former East German states like Thüringen or Sachsen-Anhalt and less than ten percent in former West German states. The difference between east and west regarding half-day or full-day kindergarten places is another. Other differences exist as well. The *Erziehungsgeld*, now substituted by the *Elterngeld*, gave parents a monthly amount for two years. Some Länder, however, e.g. Baden-Würtemberg, paid an additional year (*Landeserziehungsgeld*). For my discussion of the KiföG, yet another regional difference is relevant: In Thüringen, a cash-for-care benefit has existed for some time.

Knowing that the OECD is not in favour of the *Betreuungsgeld* one should not assume to find references to this IO in official documents. But what about the EU and the *European Alliance for Families*? And are experiences from Thüringen and countries like Norway, Finland or Sweden used in parliamentary debates and justification of the bill?

Since the Finnish home care benefit was identified as good practice within the *European Alliance for Families* during German EU Presidency in 2007, only months before the family minister proposes a similar scheme in Germany, it is natural to ask whether this was part of a conscious strategy to legitimize later national reforms (up-loading strategy). As mentioned in the theory chapter, Europeanization can both change actors´ beliefs and alter domestic opportunity structures, and Member States have a large say in the development of advice. However, von der Leyen was initially against the introduction of this scheme, something the opposition points out in parliamentary debates (Deutscher Bundestag 2008e: 19238, 19257). Moreover, in newspaper interviews she said explicitly that she was against the benefit (e.g. Der Spiegel 2007b). This means that the up-loading explanation is less likely. Perhaps the cash-for-care benefit is depicted as good policy by the Alliance was because the

country holding the EU Presidency before Germany was Finland and that this country was part of the "Troika"?[157]

In parliamentary debates, there is one explicit reference to Sweden. Markus Söder, in the Bundesrat, the second chamber of the German parliament, uses the Swedish reintroduction as a proof in itself that a cash-for-care allowance is a good instrument:

> "When a country like Sweden from July this year is providing support in the amount of approx. € 300 for families which care for children between one and three at home – no one would claim that Sweden is a backward country or a country without social political responsibility – then this shows us that we are on the right way with our Betreuungsgeld" (Bundesrat 2008: 180).

Opponents to the scheme, e.g. Ingolf Deubel (SPD) in Bundesrat (179) or Ekin Deligöz (Greens) (Deutscher Bundestag 2008d: 17196), use the same arguments as are used by the OECD and MPs in Norway who are against the scheme: It reduces female labour market participation, keeps children, particularly migrant children, out of childcare facilities, thus depriving them of a good preparation for school and so on. Although arguments are similar, there are no references to the OECD. In an application from the FDP where they ask the government to drop the whole cash-for-care benefit, Norwegian experiences are used to justify this proposal. In Norway, according to the FDP, children from low-income families are excluded from important social integration because their parents chose the cash-for-care benefit instead of sending their children to a childcare facility. Miriam Gruß, an MP from the FDP, relies on this argument and refers to Thüringen and Norway as proof in the last debate before the bill was approved (Deutscher Bundestag 2008e: 19238). This means that one out of 15 speakers refers to Norway. Marlene Rupprecht, SPD, says quite openly that the SPD has accepted the *Betreuungsgeld* as part of the childcare extension reform, but that they are not happy with it. In fact, the SPD hopes that this instrument will never become reality because the Christian Democrats might be persuaded to do otherwise

[157] What is called the EU "Troika" (or Trio presidency) is made up of representatives from the current Presidency of the European Union, the future presidency, the European Commission, the Council of Ministers and sometimes the last the Member State holding the Presidency.

before 2013 (Deutscher Bundestag 2008d: 17199).[158] It is likely that the SPD had to make a compromise in this matter. Two sources suggest this. First, a press release from the SPD themselves is very direct, using the OECD as an authority (SPD 2007). According to the press release, the OECD´s *Babies and Bosses* confirms that the two measures promoted by the Social Democrats; extension of childcare and the new parental leave scheme, are of the right kind of family policy. However, to introduce a cash-for-care benefit would create incentives for women to stay home and be disadvantageous for immigrant children who should benefit from visiting a childcare facility, again with reference to the OECD. Second, newspaper coverage clearly shows how Social Democrats are against the cash-for-care benefit (e.g. Tagesspiegel 2007c).

A German newspaper has claimed that combining extended childcare provision with a cash-for-care benefit is as logic as detoxification centres providing free beer (Tagesspiegel 2007b).[159] Critics of the benefit often refers to it as "Herdprämie" (literally stove bonus, that is kitchen award or award for women staying at home) or "Schnappsgeld" (literally booze allowance), suggesting that it will favour a traditional gendered division of labour and risk being wasted on other purposes than children. Whether such characteristics are a useful contribution to the debate could be questioned, but it is true that this new scheme can be seen as contradictive to other policies. On the other hand it may be seen as consistent in the sense that offering both public childcare and support for those who prefer other arrangements ensures real freedom of choice. Anyway, as suggested in chapter 2 with reference to Duvander et al. (2008: 22), states sometimes add new policies to older ones instead of replacing them, thus "generating models with seemingly contradictive elements". The *Betreuungsgeld* is a good example and the critique from the journalist above stresses this by pointing at the combination of promoting a dual earner and dual carer model at the same time as one is improving possibilities for parents who chose a more traditional model. What consequences this new benefit has for the German welfare model is questionable. Being rather similar to the former *Erziehungsgeld* and

[158]The SPD strategy seems to be to make this an issue in the elections in 2013 and to make sure the *Betreuungsgeld* is never implemented if they should win the elections (cf. the two SPD MPs Caren Marx and Kerstin Griese, Deutscher Bundestag 2008e: 19254, 19257).

[159] "Krippenausbau und Betreuungsgeld - das passt so gut zusammen wie Entziehungsklinik und Freibier" (Tagesspiegel 2007b).

representing familisation, that is encouraging care within the family over formal care, I argue that it is not contradictive to traditional German family and social policy.

One probable reason for what might seem contradictive, but which in fact also is common practice in countries like Norway, Finland and Sweden, is the need for compromise between parties with different priorities. Newspaper coverage supports this interpretation, saying that the cash-for-care benefit is a bonus for the traditional voters of the Conservative Christian Parties, especially CSU (e.g. Tagesspiegel 2007b-c, Der Spiegel 2008).

This also sheds light on the importance of policy ideas. The Christian Democrats have contributed to the introduction of public childcare and a new and shorter parental leave scheme which might have been so difficult for their core voters to accept that they now feel that they have to compensate in the form of a *Betreuungsgeld*. This suggests that ideas about the importance of family policy are sometimes so important that policy makers are willing to break with traditional, "safer" policies, although within limits, and that such ideas rather than interests have motivated the acceptance of *Elterngeld* and public childcare among Christian Democrats. The *Betreuungsgeld*, however, might be an example of learning without action. As discussed in the theory chapter, ideas may convince actors but domestic, economic or bureaucratic constraints may still prevent implementation of learning (Levy 1994: 290).

The way the SPD uses the OECD in their critique of the cash-for-care benefit shows that German politicians are aware of IOs policy recommendations. As we will see in the following chapter on Norway, this particular family policy instrument illustrates how countries draw more on national politics and considerations than international advice. Even if it the OECD clearly criticizes *kontantstøtten* for contradicting aims of female employment, gender equality, and children's integration and development, the German government introduces a scheme like this and Norway has kept its. It will be interesting to follow the fate of the Kifög and the introduction of *Betreuungsgeld* in German politics.

7.4 Reforms as the result of EU and OECD policy advice?

The analysis of parliamentary debates has not rendered IOs much influence on German reforms. Do other sources confirm this picture?

To isolate the effect of the influence of international organizations is difficult if not impossible. Interviews reveal several different sources that informed the reform process.[160] However, a main impression from written and oral sources is that Germany has developed its new family policy based on Scandinavian experiences. This supports assumption two saying that the EU and OECD influence would be difficult to find due to the non-coherent policy they offer.

Another potential source which can shed light on the latest reform initiatives in Germany is the National Action Plans (NAPs) and National Reform Programmes (NRPs). These reports present individual Member States´ actions and future plans regarding objectives and guidelines. Thus, one may find arguments for the reforms here and if one should expect to find references to EU influence then this should be the most likely source. Since the TAG, the first reform I analyze, was initiated by the SPD in 2004, I restrict the search to the NAPs and NRPs of 2004-2007.

Which information about problems and solutions is considered relevant and legitimate by German policy-makers in these reports? On what grounds are decisions made? The German NRP and NAP (or more accurately the Implementation Report on National Action Plans on Social Inclusion 2003-2005) from 2005 are very similar in their argumentation within family related issues. The themes covered are childcare and all day schools, reconciliation of work and family life, poverty and female employment rates. The documents report that 230 000 new care places for children under three years will be provided in the western Länder by 2010 (NAP 2004: 33, 46, NAP 2005: 26, NRP 2005: 8, see also NSR 2006: 19). In this respect, Germany has developed a national target, but based solely on number of places. According to the NRP, this will double the available places. However, as stated by Richardt (2004), since it does not give any percentages of coverage, it is difficult to relate it to the Barcelona targets. As in EU or OECD documents, the focus on reconciliation of work

[160] E.g. conferences held by political organizations such as the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation; "Eltern-Kinder-Geld" Deutsch-Schwedisches Dialogforum, 26.4.2006.

and family life is legitimized by reference to the economic issues and increasing birth rates (NAP 2005: 5, NRP 2005: 50-51). A clear statement of this is the following quote: "Family friendliness is a substantial positive growth factor" (NRP 2005: 50, author's translation). This supports my fourth assumption, saying that the expected economic effects of new family policies, just as much as the policy in its own rights, can explain why they are proposed. However, somewhat different from the assumption, I find no final evidence that the argument about the advantages of a new family policy approach is originating with the international organizations alone, but rather that such policies in other EU/OECD – countries have proved beneficial.

In the NAP 2006, childcare for children under three is again emphasized and according to the report, coverage was around 11 percent in 2004 (2006: 13-14). Since then new places have been opened, but what the coverage is now we are not told and there is no discussion directly connected with the EU goal of 33 percent. However, to prevent social exclusion of children from disadvantaged homes, the government is prepared to take actions to achieve the goal of offering children less than three years childcare (2006: 19). Later discussions about further increasing coverage for children up till three years has revealed that Germany will reach a rate of approximately 33 percent in 2013, three years after the Barcelona-target. This is included in the NRP from 2007, but not discussed with reference to the targets set by the EU.

There are several references to the new *Elterngeld*-scheme as a way to improve the work-life balance and increase the female employment rate (NAP 2006: 7, NSR 2006: 23, NRP 2007: 80) and this reform is justified by reference to the OMC on social inclusion. The new *Elterngeld* is presented as an instrument for preventing social exclusion and to reach the goals set in the OMC of ensuring participation in society and strengthening social integration:

> (…), the employment rate of women in Germany has risen continuously in recent years and the Lisbon Strategy target of at least 60% by 2010 has almost been reached. A further increase in women's participation in paid employment decisively depends on better ways of combining families and careers. The Federal Government wants to improve the general conditions for women to take part in paid employment to secure their livelihoods. The planned further

> expansion of institutional childcare and day care and the planned introduction of parental benefit and better consideration of childcare costs will all help with this (2006: 33).

According to Büchs and Friedrich, "in the NAPs, policies and policy changes are mainly presented as responses to the requirements of the EES, not as outcome of debates and struggles among domestic policy forces" (2005: 262). The NAP and NRP from 2005 partly contradict this. These reports mostly do not refer to EU recommendations or proposals as reasons for their action. However, this is hardly needed when EU processes are the point of departure and the whole intention of the reports is to present progress so far and measures that will be introduced. Still, there are some explicit references to EU goals when it comes to women's employment and childcare institutions (NAP 2005: 15), and the NAP and NSR from 2006 are presenting family policy reforms as responses to the EU OMC inclusion and OMC employment. However, the policies presented are not developed solely for the OMC (Umbach 2004, Büchs 2006).

By investigating EU/OECD advice, German reforms and their timing, I have established more than just circumstantial evidence of a connection.[161] In the early 1990s, international organizations were more sceptical towards the welfare state and did not consider social policy as economically favourable as they do today (Kildal and Kuhnle 2006: 18). Germany's policy has been static for a long time and suddenly changed in a period where IOs took a greater interest in family issues. This is suggestive of international influence and this discussion leads to the main conclusion of the chapter: that international organizations have contributed to the introduction of

[161] The timing issue needs some qualification. According to the OECD ECEC country note on Germany, the awareness of challenges like ageing and low birth rates and the need for policy action, e.g. to provide more day care facilities for children under three and more full time kindergarten places, was already present when the review team visited Germany in June 2004 (OECD 2004a: 22). During this period the TAG-reform was for instance discussed and legislated. This means that neither the perception of a need to reform nor specific measures did come as a result of learning processes initiated by an OECD peer review process and that policy ideas must come from other national or international sources. One possible such source is the PISA study, which the OECD itself describes as having had substantial impact on German debate, a fact the German background report also stresses (BMFSFJ 2004: 51, 53, 73, 109) resulting in an understanding of how day care facilities may play an educational role. However, even though Germany was not evaluated until 2004, the ECEC project started in 1998 and policy ideas from the project may have transmitted to Germany during this early phase. Moreover, as the German background report suggests, the report might result in further self-ascertainment and link the national debate to the international debate bringing about new perspectives (OECD 2004a: 6). This illustrates also the methodological challenges connected to studies of ideational influence.

German family policy reforms, but that domestic actors and relations are decisive for their final design. I will elaborat on this now.

Correlation and causality are two different things and the former is not sufficient to prove a relationship between proposals and actual policies. Still, the picture painted in interviews with key actors at national and EU/OECD level supports the assumption that international organizations play a role for domestic family policy. Knowledge of the studies, advice and recommendations described in section 7.1 is confirmed and it is evident from the interviews that this is initiating or at least giving momentum to domestic debate. Section 7.2 has illustrated that similar policies could be interpreted as the result of learning through OMC processes - generated reports, conferences and policy ideas or as a combination of the mechanisms described earlier; participation in EU-level discussions and soft pressure through policy advice.

However, a research design comparing the degree of similarity between EU and OECD proposals and national action faces several difficulties. The question of uploading is one (Zeitlin 2005a). Member States might try to turn their own policies, preferences and proposals into the aim of the EU/OECD objectives and guidelines. This would mean that there is little external advice at all since it in large parts originates with the Member State itself and then it would make less sense to study the impact of international organizations. If Member States make their already established policies the subject of future objectives instead of developing common EU objectives, then it is possible that the effect of the supranational level is overrated. This could represent a big problem for interpretation when relying strongly on official texts (Barbier 2004: 11, 14, 15). It would, however, indicate that IOs are thought to give legitimacy for action.

Then, can shifts in the policy thinking of Germany be (partially) attributed to their participation in learning processes in international organizations like the EU or OECD? The clearest indication of this would be direct references to EU/OECD recommendations and proposals and statements that said explicitly that the reforms are meant as direct answers to this (de la Porte and Pochet 2002: 48). Not surprisingly, such statements and references are scarce. This does not prove that there has been no influence from international organizations. On the contrary, since the analysis above

has shown that there is a rather strong correspondence between what is expressed at the international level and how the German governments argue for their reforms, we do face indication of some influence. The lack of specific references to the EU or OECD as a place of inspiration is in agreement with my third assumption and could be explained by the terms credit claiming and blame avoidance (Weaver 1986). Governments are likely to take the honour for matters the public welcome and deny responsibility for less popular actions: “Governments, particularly member states of the EU, may have political reasons for over/understating OMC impact e.g. blame avoidance/credit claiming, self-presentation as good Europeans or defenders of national interest against Brussels” (Zeitlin 2004). Similarly, OMC-policies might be disguised to be nationally acceptable (Jacobsson and Schmid 2002: 89). In other words, the fact that there are few explicit references does not prove anything. Also, statements from the German Family Minister in newspaper interviews supports this interpretation: “I don't think that we should transfer social competences from the national area to Europe because we would only be complicating things but let's not underestimate the power of European discussions and their influence on national policies" (EUobserver 2007).

Several policy makers in the EU and OECD emphasize how Germany has used this arena to get a debate going at home, what was referred to as a leverage effect in chapter 5. The influence exerted on Germany is then described more as a reinforcement of national initiatives, implying that the role of international organizations in this field is best depicted as a mediator function. As one OECD expert expressed it, his organization’s impact largely depended on what a country wants to do with their advice and how interested they are in dealing with an issue (timing) (OECD interview 5). Recommendations, best practice and comparisons are not connected with any sort of sanctions. German interviewees confirm that international studies are used when fitting the national agenda. This means that policy ideas from abroad have most likelihood of having impact when the national climate is “favourable”.

Here a few comments on the development of recommendations are also relevant. They are made in close cooperation with the country in question. Comparing for instance the challenges identified by the German family ministry in its background

report to the OECD *Starting Strong* review (BMFSFJ 2004) with the policy advice of the OECD´s country note (OECD 2004a) reveals a very high level of consistency. The OECD raises some new issues, but they are partly posed as questions and not clear recommendations (see e.g. OECD 2004a: 43). Governments may even ask for a sharpening of critique if they need to do unpopular things (OECD interview 6) and may prefer "to [have] uncomfortable messages passed by the OECD" (OECD interview 2). Thus, reports are based on consensus and the arrow of influence can go both ways (see e.g. Mahon 2007a). A similar issue is the initiative by the 2007 German EU Presidency to launch an *Alliance for Families* which will be a framework for the exchange of family policy best practice. This is illustrative of a very different attitude than what was present among German policy makers some years ago, as well as of how the government hopes to ride on the crest of a wave in national debates. Still, some causation must be exercised when interpreting such initiatives or statements in an EU-context. The comment by the German family minister at a recent meeting of European family and equality ministers about how Germany's latest decision to increase childcare facilities was an answer to the Barcelona targets, must for instance be taken with a pinch of salt since holding the EU presidency obviously could colour such statements (von der Leyen 2007). The analysis of parliamentary debates has for example found hardly any references to the EU or OECD. Still, there is no doubt that German governmental reports do consider family policy in the light of experience in EU Member States and with reference to EU goals.

Interviews indicate that comparisons of Member States´ policies are taken very seriously at the national level and used in the development of policy. A Flemish ministry official who participated in the Swedish peer review on childcare policies presented in chapter 5, underscores the role of the EU and OECD in providing this information, stressing at the same time that the basis for best practice is always found at national level, implying that the EU is not necessarily the "initial mover" (EU Interview 7). Interviewed members of the German Social (SPD) and Christian (CDU) Democratic Party also cite rankings as an important stimulus for national debate (German Interview 2 and 6), and references to rankings or comparisons appear in all interviews conducted in Germany. In these rankings, Germany is presented as a

laggard when it comes to childcare and female employment. As the analysis of parliamentary debates and interviews show, MPs are very well aware about how Germany fares in such comparisons. According to the interviewed CDU – representative, the acceptance of certain demands is increased through such international studies and this makes it a bit easier in Germany to address and gather support for (German interview 6). This sounds very much like the peer pressure, leverage effect and awareness and self-assessment – mechanisms described in chapter 5 on the EU. It can be safely assumed that both the EU and OECD play an important role and exert some influence within family policy in offering these comparisons. The search for solutions, however, seems to be more directed towards individual countries rather than the international organizations. An interview with former family minister Renate Schmidt (SPD) indicates how European goals were useful in argumentation, but less important for actual policy-making, referring instead to Sweden as a main instigator (German Interview 1). She says that the *Elterngeld* was more or less a copy of the Swedish parental leave system. There are in general many indications that individual countries and Sweden in particular has played a more important role for policy learning than IOs. The many similarities between the German and Swedish leave and childcare policy is one indication, statements in interviews another (German interview 2, 4). It is also possible to find many studies commissioned by the German family ministry which either discuss the transferability of Swedish policy to Germany (e.g. Prognos AG 2005) or are very comparative in general (e.g. Rürup and Gruescu 2003, Bertram et al. 2005, Seventh Family Report 2006). Several authors support the interpretation that Scandinavian, particular Sweden, played an important role as an ideal (section 7.3.2). This is hardly surprising, as these organizations do not have a family policy of their own and their recommendations and advice is limited. Börzel and Risse (2003) and Risse, Cowles and Caporaso (2001) argue that a misfit between national and international (European) advice trigger change, the pressure to change depending on how big the mismatch ("goodness of fit") is. In the case of EU family policy this misfit - condition is partly lacking as there is little official EU family policy. The EU and OECD thus identify and increase awareness on weak points and direct attention towards successful countries through best practice, while the actual

learning of concrete arrangements may occur through bilateral exchange (mediator function). Key German policy actors refer to Scandinavia and sometimes France as the main source of inspiration for the new parental leave scheme and childcare policy. Still, the motive behind these references to individual countries could be that IOs are often viewed as bureaucratic and unpopular in the population, whereas experience from single countries is more easily understood. The exchange of best practice may not have happened by bilateral contact to the same extent without the initial EU and OECD reviews.

Ideas have an independent meaning for decision-making processes, but they still rely on actors and/or institutions willing to defend and promote them. The influence of ideas from international organizations seems to depend on the political climate. This can explain why Germany has only recently paid attention to the EU level. To make sure that the influence of the EU and OECD is not overrated and misunderstood: it is important only in as far as national actors are interested in reforming. German family policy may thus be an instance of what Mark Thatcher (2002) has shown to be the case for telecommunications. EU regulation in this field is almost absent and does not put a lot of pressure on the Member States, but countries in the process of reform have still benefited from European policy to justify and legitimize reforms.

7.5 Conclusions

To sum up, my analysis shows two important points regarding the family policy ideas promoted by the EU and OECD. First, German policy makers rarely refer to these IOs when explaining the need for new measures. Second, the ideas the German policy makers rely on when claiming that change is necessary, and the kind of policies they want, are rather similar to how the EU and OECD argue. The very same ideas dominate debates and policy documents. It thus seems reasonable to borrow a phrase from Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser (2004: 150) and say that „Without the infusion of new ideas into the policy discourse, the overall change would not have happened“. Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser further argue that when policy actors accept that one faces new

challenges, they start searching for new policies (2004: 151). The kind of causal ideas offered by the EU and OECD are helpful here and it is this kind of arguments German politicians have relied on. However, as mentioned already, there are few signs supporting the claim that these IOs have been crucial and I have no indications that the political parties changed their mind solely due to EU and OECD discourse. The clearest sign is the awareness of Germany's inefficient policies made visible through league tables and comparisons. This function played by IOs is well documented (e.g. Trubek and Trubek 2005a: 92, Zeitlin 2005a: 477-478, Büchs and Friedrich 2005: 264). Instead it seems like individual countries and national policy reports and expert communities have been the main suppliers of input. There are many references to individual countries like Sweden and an important source for German politicians are probably recent national family policy studies like the Seventh Family Report. The latter is a special kind of report in the sense that it is a regular publication which the government should prepare every second election period and present it to the parliament for discussion (see BMFSFJ 2006c: XXIII for more background information). A regular report which is submitted for parliamentary debate has better chances of being known among MPs than international studies by IOs.

The comments on methodological challenges connected to this chapter's approach show that I cannot fully answer the question of whether shifts in the policy thinking of Germany should be attributed to their participation in learning processes in international organizations. To trace ideas, however, is more than causal analysis. It is interesting per se to see how different actors use concepts, argue and justify policies.

Concerning the findings of the chapter, it seems like my assumptions are partly supported by the analysis. To claim that ideas supported by IOs have greater likelihood of acceptance than other ideas is probably correct, but there are few references to international advice to support national reform proposals. The EU/OECD-influence on German policy is not quite clear, something which, in accordance with the second assumption, can be explained by the lack of a distinct EU/OECD family policy, but also by methodological challenges. The issue of family policy reforms was not raised by the EU or OECD alone. It has probably gradually become important due to socioeconomic trends and cultural changes, factors this chapter has not addressed. The

two organizations play a role, though mainly by providing information and arguments, and especially the comparisons they bring are influential. As such, their monitoring and distribution of information rather than their policy development and advice is important (mediator role). This interpretation contrasts with much of the earlier research on EU and OECD's roles in family issues (see e.g. Pfau-Effinger 2008: 200). Still, bilateral learning is more influential. Somewhat paradoxically, family policy is a field with little developed formal and systematic exchange of best practice as there, for instance, is no OMC for this field, but traces of learning are still very evident for Germany. A huge interest in learning is present among both politicians and bureaucrats. Also, the German government claims credit for this reform probably because the reforms are rather popular with the public.

Lastly, it seems plausible to argue that one of the main reasons behind the reforms, which are not traditional Christian Democratic family policy, is, as argued by the EU and the OECD, the overall economic advantages they are expected to bring about. The interviews and documentary sources do not provide final evidence for this, but the reasons given for the reforms clearly supports this interpretation. Interviewed representatives of the OECD regard coupling of issues to be one of the organizations main contributions to national debate; e.g. how ageing cannot be solved through pension reforms alone, issues such as fertility must also be included (OECD Interview 2).

The fourth assumption might seem to contradict the argument of ideational influence and rather imply that interests constitute the crucial part. However, what the assumption really says is that the impact of the idea is strengthened and made even more attractive by the fact that it has proved to be beneficial for employment rates of women, fertility rates and sustainability of the welfare state. According to an SPD-interviewee, the need for family reforms in Germany first gained momentum when family-friendly policies were understood to be economically important (German Interview 2). This interpretation is disseminated at the level of international organizations. As such, German reforms may be an instance of how ideas can create interests and override earlier interests, as opposed to how ideas merely justify interests that were already present (Hochschild 2006). Family policy is a less institutionalized

field, open to new ideas, and as the German reforms entail a multiplicity of justifications almost everybody could find an interpretation with which one would agree, be it politicians from the SPD, CDU or CSU.[162]

Evidence does not support a claim that IOs were key arenas for the development of the consensus that reconciliation policies such as the *Elterngeld* and extension of childcare were necessary. However, this does not mean that the theoretical approach relying on ideas has not been useful. First, foreign lessons have been important both for the direction of reform as well as for the actual design of the parental leave scheme, which is very close to Scandinavian schemes, particular the Swedish version. As López Santana (2006: 492) argues; if a national actor already perceives a policy as good, an IO can reinforce this through soft pressure. This is probably a better description of what happened in Germany than that the EU and/or OECD redefined the views of policy makers. Second, foreign policy ideas seem to have moved the debate in Germany from whether reform is needed to the next stages of how reforms should be carried out. Third, policy ideas are only influential when actors use them to promote change, as has happened in Germany. Lastly, my analysis supports the claim that ideas gain influence when there exist some kind of dissatisfaction (policy failure) and that ideas able to solve many problems at the same time (malleable ideas) have good chances of acceptance.

[162] I owe this suggestion to a discussion with Sigrid Leitner, who, however, should not be held responsible for the way it is used here.

Chapter 8 Norway and the transmission of family policy ideas

> "Primarily we are missionaries" (Norwegian interview 4).

How domestic is domestic family politics really? What is Norway's role in the ´idea game` (Marcussen 2002, 2004) of collecting, formulating and transferring family policy ideas? Is Norway best described as an exporter or importer of family policy ideas, or is it a mere spectator, neither providing lessons nor drawing on experiences from abroad?

Recent feature articles by Kildal and Kuhnle (2004b, 2007) or Østerud (2007) have claimed that in Norway, the governments accept critiques and recommendations of international organizations (IOs) without much debate. Analysis of Norway's response to OECD recommendations on employment, pensions, health and education concludes that Norway is amenable to ideas from the OECD, partly as a result of the close collaboration between national authorities and the OECD in the development of such recommendations (Kildal and Kuhnle 2004a-b, 2007). This work suggests that Norway is open towards foreign ideas and inclined to follow the advice of international organizations. As in chapter 7, I thus assume that social policy ideas supported by IOs have greater likelihood of being implemented in Norway than ideas not enjoying this support, as IOs both may convince political actors of the need to reform and provide legitimacy for reformers (Marcussen 2002). I expect to find at least some concordance between international advice and national family policy reforms and my first assumption is that the power of ideas is strengthened if they are accepted by and further disseminated by influential IOs.

For countries that traditionally leave most welfare responsibility to families themselves, e.g. South European countries, international actors may push for a family policy aiming at security and flexibility for families with young children and for gender equality. However, Norway is well known for its highly developed welfare state in general (Esping-Andersen and Korpi 1987, Moene 2007) and family - and women - friendly welfare arrangements in particular (Saraceno 1997, Ellingsæter and

Leira 2004, Berven 2005, Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2006, 2007a, Haavet 2006, Kildal and Kuhnle 2006). At least on the surface Norway appears in line with most experts´ views on ´good policy`.[163] Moreover, in a new study of Norway (and Denmark), Kildal and Kuhnle (2006) investigate EU advice and OECD economic surveys from 1990-2000. They find few international recommendations or comments on family support policies and conclude that neither the EU nor the OECD can be seen as having influenced the development of policies in this field. Thus, I do not assume that policy ideas from IOs play a crucial role for the development of Norwegian family policies. My second assumption is that Norway is more of an exporter of ideas than an importer, as there has been less need for the import of policies to Norway during the last two decades due to an acknowledged position as a forerunner country.

However, since other countries, particularly Sweden, are thought to be an even stronger paradigmatic representative of the "social democratic" welfare state (Carlson 1990, Esping-Andersen 1990) and since Norway is not part of the social policy initiatives in the European Union such as OMC-processes, this export role is not assumed to be very comprehensive. My third assumption is that Norway is not a core "teacher" to other countries since it is not a member of the EU and thus at least partly decoupled from an allegedly important arena for learning and exchange of ideas.[164]

These three partly compatible assumptions guide the analysis. Evidence consistent with assumption one and three would support the claim that IOs are important in the transmission of ideas also within family policy, whereas evidence consistent with assumption two would be more in line with earlier research (e.g. Hantrais 2007) giving the EU and OECD little competence and impact in this field.

The main question in my analysis is how ideas from IOs on national family policy are spread and whether they have an impact. This chapter focuses on the role of international organizations (IOs) and Norway's possible role as a participant in the cross-border exchange or "trade" of ideas. Rather than attempting to explain why

[163] A term to be understood as sucessful in contributing to gender equality, high female employment rates and birth rates and low child poverty rates.
[164] The OMC strategy is not included by the EEA agreement, but it is still of importance to Norway and it is allowed to take part in some programmes (e.g. combat of poverty) and working groups (e.g. OMC on education) (NHD 2004: 15). Norway finances national experts working with the EU Commission on OMC-issues and Norwegian politicians are also often invited to meetings of the EU (see below).

certain reforms happened in Norway,[165] it intends to shed light on one possible source of influence in these reform processes; advice from IOs. A study of why the reforms developed as they did would need a more comprehensive analysis, including contextual factors and the historical background (Ellingsæter 2003: 423, Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2007a: 655). Like the previous chapter, this chapter does not focus on such issues. Instead, I consider it interesting in itself to see how IOs evaluate Norwegian family policy and how national policy makers deal with this. The chapter will also discuss Norway's possible role as an exporting country. Norway, like many other countries, likes to present itself as a country leading the way in social policy. Is this role confirmed or disproved when reading international reviews and reports?

I shall first describe what kind of critique and advice Norway faces from the EU and OECD on its family policy. Then I present Norwegian family policy and reforms. Sections 8.3-8.5 discuss whether Norway is best depicted as an exporter or importer of family policy ideas or a "non-participant" in the international transmission of ideas.

8.1 Family policy advice from international organizations

Since non-binding policy ideas and recommendations naturally can transmit also to non-members, I briefly present the EU´s position on family policy and how Norway responds. Moreover, Norwegian policy makers are more or less always invited to EU – meetings on related subjects like gender equality and childcare. Investigating whether Norwegian key actors are influenced by developments in the EU thus makes sense.[166]

Since 2003, the Ministry of Trade and Industry has published a report that gives a Norwegian perspective on the Lisbon strategy of the EU.[167] The EU cooperation within this strategy is, as alluded to, not included by the EEA agreement, but it is of importance to Norway and it takes part in some programmes and working groups. In

[165] Readers interested in Norwegian family policy debates and the position of different political parties are referred to Bay (1988), Berven, Hansen and Wærness (2001), Berven (2005), Hatland (2001) or Håland (2001).
[166] For instance, Norwegian ministers and ministry officials have participated at EU conferences in Berlin in 2004 and 2007 and Heidelberg 2007 where family policy was on the agenda (Lindén 2007b, Norwegian interviews 5, 6).
[167] There exist four such reports. In the introduction in the last report (2007), it is said that this report is the fifth (page 5), but the ministry has confirmed by email that there are only four.

the words of one former Minister, Odd Eriksen, "We include Norway in the statistical material, and apply the indicators to Norway in order to compare our performance to that of the EU countries" (NHD 2006: 3).[168]

The EU has two important directives within family policy: the parental leave directive of 1996 and the pregnant workers directive of 1992 (cf. chapter 5). These are minimum standards that Norway fulfils with a clear margin.[169] Apart from directives, the most explicit family policy ideas of the EU are found within childcare and parental leave. The Barcelona targets of 33 percent childcare coverage for children under three years and 90 percent coverage for children 3- 6 years, is perhaps the most direct aim. Countries that fail to meet these goals, e.g. Germany, are constantly reminded of this goal in EU studies.

Being a member of the EEA means that Norway is often included in studies of family policy, although more often as a reference point than as a country advised to conduct certain policies. For instance, in a commissioned study, Plantenga and Remery (2005) compare reconciliation policies of all EU Member States, EEA countries and some candidate countries. For the availability of childcare facilities, Norway fails to comply with the Barcelona target for children under three years, but reaches the goal of 3- 6 years (2005: 33-34).[170] The graphs and rankings presented in such reports show that Norway is a leading country for both female employment rates and fertility rates (cf. chapter 5 and appendix 6). Views on national family policy are, obviously, more direct in such commissioned studies than in official documents.

In the *European Alliance for Families*, the EU presents the Finnish home care allowance, which is similar to the Norwegian *kontantstøtte*, as one good practice. The EU has expressed concerns about policies that keep women out of work for long periods (EU Commission/Council 2003), somewhat in contradiction to naming the Finnish home care allowance a good policy, and seems to advocate short, well-paid

[168] One could argue that this in itself shows an impact of the EU on governments, which, since the first report, have included anti-membership parties.
[169] New relevant Community legislation is incorporated into the EEA agreement and due to the agreement, the two directives apply to Norway. However, as Norway already fulfilled these minimum standards it had no practical importance (Dølvik and Ødegård 2004).
[170] As my presentation of Norwegian family policy reforms will show and according to Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen (2007a: 667), the target for children under three was also reached in 2005. Plantenga and Remery (2005) rely on numbers from Eurostat in 2004 and this could explain the discrepancy. Cf. Plantenga et al. (2008) for a discussion on the reliability and comparability of statistics on the provision of childcare.

parental leave schemes. Making men take more responsibility for their children is also considered an important goal (European Commission 2006b).

The second international actor thought to have potential influence on Norway is the OECD. *Babies and Bosses* is the most recent OECD study of families. Norway is not treated directly in the four first volumes of the *Babies and Bosses* series (OECD 2002a, 2003a, 2004b, 2005a).[171] The last volume (OECD 2007c) includes Norway, but this volume constitutes more of an overview of earlier publications supplemented by secondary resources. As it is also published too late to have had any influence on the period I cover I will only briefly depict what it says about Norway.

Norway generally performs well, with high levels of gender equality, female employment and high birth rates. Norway provides support to families in all phases (e.g. around birth, childcare facilities, out-of-school hours) and of the "right kind": well-paid parental leave, perhaps a bit too long in the view of the OECD, but with sensible incentives for fathers to spend more time with their children.[172] Childcare coverage is high and the quality good. The OECD sees no reason why Norway should not continue to spend much money in this sector (2007c: 138). However, the Nordic model also relies on very high taxes, in fact to such an extent that it is unlikely that other countries could easily copy it (2007: 22). *Babies and Bosses* also criticizes the cash-for-care benefit heavily. Although this is done with regard to Finland and not directed specifically at Norway, the same arguments used in the Norwegian *Economic Surveys*, that I will discuss below, appear in addition to a new one: The benefit makes employers reluctant to hire women or promote their career, as they assume that many women will leave work for long periods (2007: 113).[173]

The Norwegian *Economic Surveys* make several references to family policies. The first five surveys following the introduction of the cash-for-care benefit in 1998

[171] There may be different reasons for this. One interviewee noted that three other Nordic countries were already among the 13 states in the study (OECD interview 5). Another interviewee believes that the study may have fallen inbetween the responsibilities of two ministries (Norwegian interview 6).
[172] The Norwegian arrangement can still be criticized for lacking incentives. It does not offer all men full wage compensation due to the income ceiling, meaning that men often lose more than women when taking leave.
[173] Research on the effect of the cash-for-care allowance shows that it has not had such a strong influence on parental actions as many thought or feared. Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen conclude that the reform had only a very modest negative impact on female employment rates (2007a: 661, 2007b). The analysis of Rønsen (2005) concludes that it had a somewhat more negative effect on the employment rate than Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen (2007a-b) say, but still not a large impact. Daugstad (2006) has shown, however, that immigrants use the cash-for-care benefit more often than other families. Cf. Morgan and Zippel (2003) for a comparative perspective.

(surveys in 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2004) criticize this benefit. It is described as a too generous scheme and a work disincentive that has lowered the labour supply of women (OECD 2000b, 2001d). The benefit was assessed to have a negative impact on (female) employment participation even before parliament adopted it (OECD 1998b: 57, 60), and in the following report the OECD says explicitly that the reform is going in the wrong direction and is not in line with earlier OECD advice (1999c: 57, 59). The OECD also expresses concerns about how the cash-for-care benefit reduces "the cognitive development and social integration of children" (2002c: 14). The OECD is very sceptical towards the effect this may have on certain parts of the population:

> "The childcare cash benefit has also created strong incentives for low-income parents to quit their jobs, which may make their return to the labour market difficult, to care for their children at home. (…) As a result, children from less educated and immigrant families are more likely to be the last to enter formal childhood educational and care facilities, reducing their development opportunities and their knowledge of the Norwegian language" (2002c: 85).

In the same year, the OECD also judges the parental contribution to kindergarten costs to be too high, again especially for low income families (2002c: 83), and the *kontantstøtte* is mentioned as a threat to further expansion of childcare facilities (2002c: 85). The following survey mentions briefly that the division of work between men and women at home is negatively influenced by the cash-for-care benefit (2004d: 127). The *Economic Surveys* of 2005b and 2007 have no comments on family policies at all.[174]

In 1998 the OECD launched the *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy* (ECEC), which resulted in two reports: *Starting Strong I* (2001) and *II* (2006). As described in chapter 6 on the family policy ideas of the OECD, countries participating in such reviews first write a background report describing national family policy; laying out challenges, and including existing research and statistics. The second step is a visit by the OECD review team, and the third is its report (the country note). The fourth and final step is the comparative report

[174] Asked about this, OECD officials could not give a clear answer to why the critique of the cash-for-care benefit was suddenly left out of the report (OECD interview 6).

(e.g. *Starting Strong I* 2001).[175] The OECD country note on Norway (OECD 1999d) expresses the same concerns about the effect of the cash-for-care benefit that the *Economic Surveys* do (gender equality issues, withdrawal from the labour force, development of children, especially vulnerable groups like immigrants) and the same comments upon high parental contribution in the funding of early childhood services. The report welcomes further building of childcare centres, and this particular review, more than other OECD reports, stresses the importance of qualifications of staff (i.e. too few pedagogues in childcare institutions).

Starting Strong I does not include country specific recommendations but instead gives advice to all OECD countries, with the note that different national contexts also should allow diversity in response (OECD 2001b: 125). The report, not surprisingly, includes many of the same issues found in the *Economic Surveys* and *Starting Strong* country note on Norway. Eight key elements of a successful ECEC policy are identified (see chapter 6 for details) and advice referred to as *policy lessons* include the following: increase coverage in childcare facilities, particularly for children under three years of age, provide paid and job-protected parental leave of about one year, focus on development of children from all groups including immigrants, provide substantial governmental funding of childcare institutions, and focus on quality and training of staff.

Starting Strong II (2006) draws many of the same conclusions. In addition, it also includes a kind of stock-taking, implying that the report discusses developments in Norway since the first report. According to this review: "Since 2001 substantial adjustments to legislation and funding processes have been underway as Norway moves towards universal access to ECEC services for all children under 6 years" (OECD 2006a: 399). The OECD seems quite pleased with the development and the actions planned by the new government.[176] However, as discussed in chapter 6, the OECD has a very consensual way of developing its advice and the evaluated Member

[175] As part of this review the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs hosted a meeting in on "Expanding access for young children from low-income or minority backgrounds" (Oslo, 6-7 June 2002, see http://www.oecd.org/document/42/0,3343,en_2649_39263231_1941738_1_1_1_1,00.html This illustrates that Norway has been an active participant and even organized a workshop. See also Leseman (2002).

[176] It is somewhat unclear on what information this section on developments is based. Is it merely a report from the new government sent to the OECD, or has the OECD checked other and more objective sources as well?

States may largely decide what is included in the reports. This fact must inform discussions of possible influence.

The advice from the EU and OECD is summarized in table 8.1. I have included advice on parental leave as well, because it is relevant for the later discussion of the possible Norwegian export of family policies and because it is an important part of family policy, with strong connections to both the cash-for-care and childcare issues.

Table 8.1: International actors´ comments on Norwegian family policy since 1998

Scheme/ benefit	OECD	EU
Overall advice	Implement work-friendly family policies	Implement work-friendly family policies
Childcare	"Building new public and private childcare centres and introducing a ceiling for fees in publicly-funded ones" (Economic Survey 2004: 137) Increase coverage in childcare facilities, particularly for children under three years of age (Starting Strong 2001)	Increase coverage in childcare facilities, particularly for children under three years of age (Barcelona targets, Plantenga and Remery 2005)
Parental leave	Well paid and job-protected parental leave of about one year (Starting Strong 2001) Nordic parental leave perhaps a bit too long (Babies and Bosses 2007) Incentives for men to care for their children (Babies and Bosses 2007)	Well paid parental leave schemes. Equal sharing of caring responsibilities (Plantenga and Remery 2005, European Commission 2006b)
Cash-for-care allowance	´(…) reconsider the childcare cash benefit, which contributes to damping the supply of labour and may be less conducive to the cognitive development and social integration of children than the provision of formal educational and care services` (Economic Survey 2002: 88)	Contradictory view: express concerns about policies that keep women out of work for long periods (EU Commission/Council 2003) but refers to cash-for-care allowances as good practice (web portal of the European Alliance for Families).

8.2 Norwegian family policy and recent reforms

As Sainsbury (2001), Leira (2002) and Skevik (2004) state, Norway is a Nordic laggard within reconciliation policies. Skevik (2004: 95) further argues that Norway is neither a clear male-breadwinner nor a dual-breadwinner country due to its mix of family policies, which encourages both parents to work and care for their children (parental leave schemes, father quota, childcare coverage), and which also provide

opportunities for a more traditional division of work between the sexes (cash-for-care benefit). This chapter covers two such seemingly contradictory family policies; the cash-for-care benefit (*kontantstøtte*) introduced in 1998 and the extension of childcare, especially since 2005. The choice is justified as follows: the previous chapter showed how both types of reforms are highly debated in contemporary Germany, and thus invites a comparison of arguments and possible learning between the two countries (chapter 9).[177] *Kontantstøtten* is one of the most contested family policies in Norway (Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2007b, Grødem 2008), while the extension of childcare has been on the agenda in Norway for at least 30 years and in 2008 finally seems to be solved. The cash-for-care benefit was characterised by a strong left-right conflict while increased childcare coverage is something all parties support. Common for both issues is that there are few vested interests or strong organizations involved, a situation which is very different from fields such as pensions or employment, implying that there might be a larger room for foreign experiences to make themselves heard.[178]

The cash benefit allows parents to stay home with their children for another two years following the parental leave benefit-period. The benefit covered one-year-olds from the start and two-years-olds from 1 February 1999. It was introduced by a centre coalition minority government headed by the Christian People's Party (KrF). The benefit is not only meant to let parents spend more time with their children by enabling one parent to stay at home but also to increase parents´ freedom of choice as to who should care for their children by allowing them to buy private daycare. The allowance is paid to parents of 1-3 year old children who do not attend a childcare centre. Parents may let their child go to a childcare centre for only a few hours and have the cash

[177] One could discuss whether an increase in childcare facilities qualifies to be called a reform in Norway, having been gradually extended for decades and thus not really representing a new policy. For simplicity, I refer to the recent efforts as a reform to use the same vocabulary for similar policies in Norway and Germany. In Germany, the recent decision to extend childcare beyond doubt is a reform, as it represents a whole new approach in the Federal Republic to children's upbringing and mothers´ attachment to the labour market.

[178] A more practical reason for the selection of these reforms is that focussing on other important reforms, e.g. the extension of parental leave schemes and introduction of the father's quota in 1993, would mean that I would have to go even further back in time, thus making it more difficult to contact the key actors interviews. The father's quota was extended by one week in 2005 and 2006. A further extension is discussed, alternatively reserving more of the existing parental leave for the father in line with the system in Iceland. This debate takes place after my period of investigation, but would be an interesting example of travelling ideas worth closer analysis, as the debate is explicitly about the introduction of a foreign model of parental leave. In the state budget proposal presented in October 2008, the government proposed that from July 2009 the father´s quota will be 10 weeks. Two of these are taken from the mother´s leave, two more are added, making the total parental leave period 46 or 56 weeks.

benefit reduced accordingly. The benefit is thus conditioned on non-use or limited use of state subsidised childcare centres (Skevik 2005). The allowance of € 400 (3300 NOK) a month (full rate) is not taxed.

The second reform I study is the extension of childcare facilities. As Skevik and Hatland argue (2008: 96), what constitutes full (*sufficient*) coverage is hard to say, but if the 75 percent threshold of the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is used, Norway fulfilled this criterion already in 1999. However, judging from the heated debate on childcare, which continued in the new millennium, Norway had some way to go before full coverage was reached in reality. Moreover, coverage for the cildren aged 1-3, the age group for which parents can draw on *kontantstøtte*, was far from satisfying the demand (Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2007a: 653, Skevik and Hatland 2008: 96).

Taking office in October 2005, the new red-green majority coalition of the Labour Party (DNA), Centre Party (SP), and Socialist Left Party (SV), promised to achieve full childcare coverage by the end of 2007, presenting this goal as one of the government's most important. At the time the coalition came to power, the coverage was about 50 percent for 1 to 2 year-olds and around 88 percent for 3 to 5-year-olds (table 8.2). The government could not reach its aim of full coverage in time, and in January 2008, 10 percent (42) of the municipalities were still unable to offer all children a place. Of these, all but four municipalities expected to reach the goal during 2008 (Asplan Viak 2007b).

The government declaration from 2005 (the Soria Moria Declaration) mentions several aims for childcare in addition to full coverage: price reduction (maximum monthly rates),[179] a legal right to a place in kindergarten, and changing the whole cash-for-care benefit when full coverage is met. A legal entitlement to childcare for children aged 1-6 will be in force from August 2009. So far, not much had happened to the cash-for-care benefit, but in 2006 it was reduced from € 445 to € 400 a month (3657/3303 NOK) and the period cut by one month. However, the party programmes

[179] From 1.1.2006, the maximal allowed fee per month for kindergarten attendance (*makspris barnehage*) was reduced from €335 to €275 (2750/2250 NOK). However, this was not a decision made by the new government alone but part of an agreement reached already in 2003 (*Barnehageforliket*). See Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen (2007a: 662, 2007b: 177)

of the three government parties show that the Labour and Socialist Left Party wish to abolish it completely while the Centre Party, which was also in government when the benefit was introduced in 1998, wants to keep it, although it has also become more open to changes.

While the cash-for-care benefit is (partly) unpopular with the EU and OECD, other Norwegian family policies must be said to be close to advice from these IOs. Like Germany, Norway has not been part of all international reviews discussed here, but reforms are in concordance with policy ideas of EU and OECD reports and recommendations. Some of the reports, however, are published too late to have any impact on the reforms I investigate.

Table 8.2: Summary of changes after October 2005

	← October 2005	**October 2005 →**
Cash-for-care benefit (*kontantstøtte*)	Benefit period: 24 months Monthly amount: € 445 (full rate)	Benefit period: 23 months Monthly amount: € 400 (full rate)
Childcare coverage by 20.9.2005 and 31.12.2007	Children aged 1-2: 50,2 % Children aged 3-5: 88,3 %	Children aged 1-2: 69,2 % Children aged 3-5: 94,3 %

Numbers for childcare coverage are from Asplan Viak (2006, 2007a) and SSB (2008).

8.3 Norway as importer of family policy ideas

Have internationally disseminated ideas played a role in public debate and policy - making? The following analysis will investigate whether international actors have influenced national reforms. The term "influence" is problematic (cf. chapter 4). Here I am interested in whether international advice has left traces in different sources and resulted in or figured in debates. As outlined in chapter 4 on data and methods, this will be done by searching for direct evidence such as statements confirming foreign inspiration, comparing national reform arguments with international advice and consulting (interview) key actors. The cash-for-care and childcare issues will be discussed separately.

8.3.1 Cash-for-care benefit

The argumentation used in parliamentary debates on the cash-for-care benefit can be studied in different phases.[180] I will focus on four phases: a) around the not-adopted proposal to introduce the benefit in 1996, b) the actual decision on the introduction of the benefit in 1998, c) the evaluation in 2002, and d) the minor changes made in 2005.

In the first phase, *kontantstøtte* was not adopted when proposed by representatives of KrF, SP and V (Venstre, the Liberal Party) in 1996. The cleavage between the left and the right about cash benefits versus services was very prominent in these parliamentary debates (St.tid.1996-1997a-b). This conflict dimension is old in Norwegian (and international) family policy discussions (Håland 2001). This issue is much more discussed than international experiences, which only 3 out of 17 speakers refer to. As could be expected, since these debates took place before the EU or the OECD really became involved in family policy, there are no references to these actors here. Those who refer to experiences abroad argue that Norway fares well internationally in cash benefits for families, but that Nordic neighbours and France have substantially more support for services (childcare institutions). In the words of former Minister of Children and Family Affairs, Sylvia Brustad: "We are actually on the top in Europe regarding benefits in cash and we will not abolish such arrangements. But what we have said in the acknowledgement that we are almost at the bottom regarding services in kind, (…), is that our priority towards year 2000 must be (…) the provision of childcare to an affordable price" (St.tid.1996-1997b: 1813).[181]

The second phase is around the introduction of the benefit in 1998. Here many references to international experiences appear, but none to international organizations. In the proposition to the Storting on the introduction of the cash-for-care benefit (St.prp. nr 53 1997-1998), the Finnish *Hemvårdsstöd* is presented. The characteristics of the benefit, as well as its similarities to and differences from its Norwegian counterpart and some of the consequences, are discussed. No direct expressions of influence or inspiration appear drawn from Finland. The proposition briefly mentions

[180] The Christian People's Party suggested a sort of cash-for-care benefit called *omsorgsbidrag* (similar to the Swedish *vårdnadsbidrag*) already in 1984 (Bay 1988: 41).
[181] See also Karian Lian's speeches in the same debate (St.tid.1996-1997: 1811) for similar arguments.

Swedish and Danish arrangements, but for a number of reasons it concludes that they are not relevant for the Norwegian situation. Moreover, it is mentioned that some Norwegian municipalities have introduced cash-for-care benefits, but as these were mostly small, rural municipalities, their experiences are not regarded as very relevant for a national scheme.

The proposition also discusses the possible negative consequences of the new scheme, such as disincentives to work, reduced female employment participation, vulnerable groups (e.g. children from immigrant families) or gender equality concerns. However, the government opposed most of these. For instance, the gender equity issue (how the new scheme could strengthen the traditional division between male work outside and female work inside the household) is met by the claim that it represents a renewal of gender equality policy by acknowledging former unpaid domestic work. Furthermore, the government emphasizes how the new scheme gives freedom of choice and that gender equality does not mean that everyone must make the same choices. As in the debate following the non-successful proposal to introduce *kontantstøtte* in 1996, the conflict between benefits in kind and cash is prominent. It is also important to say that the advocates of the cash-for-care scheme still pursue the goal of full childcare coverage. Anyway, this shows that the critique later levelled against Norway from the OECD was not first raised by this organization.

In the main parliamentary debate on the introduction (St.tid.1996-1997a) and the recommendation from the Committee on Family and Cultural Affairs (Innst.S.nr. 200), there are extensive references to Finland and its experience. Out of 40 speakers in the debate, eight emphasize different sides of the Finnish *Hemvårdsstöd*. Some references are factual, e.g. the mentioning of how the family committee visited Finland (and Sweden) to learn about its cash-for-care models and childcare (St.tid. 1997-1998: 3437, MP Aarrestad, SP) or how Finland served as a model for the Norwegian scheme (Innst.S.nr. 200). However, most speakers use the Finnish experience to justify or criticize the scheme. Typically, opponents underline how the Finnish scheme is supposedly better because Finland combines it with a legal right to a place in a public childcare facility and lower parental contributions for childcare institutions, two important features that the defenders of the Norwegian cash-for-care benefit were

unwilling to introduce. While positive about these Finnish arrangements, opponents still criticize the *Hemvårdsstöd* for resulting in reduced female employment and the maintenance of traditional sex roles. Advocates take Finnish developments as proof that the negative developments that critics´ expected in Norway will not materialise as the projected withdrawal from the labour market in Finland has not been as radical as opponents feared.

In 2002 (the third phase), the Labour government evaluated the cash-for-care benefit (St.meld nr. 43 2000-2001). In the debate following the government's report to the Storting, only one reference is made to how "international experiences" allegedly show that active public policy is needed to achieve quality in care, shared parenting and reconciliation of work and family life, and that the cash-for-care scheme, in the view of the government, is not consistent with this goal (St.tid 2001-2002a: 2340, MP Trond Giske, DNA). A more or less identical reference is made in the report itself (St.meld nr. 43 (2000-2001): 44). There are no comments about feedback from international actors. This is after the benefit had been criticized heavily by the OECD several times in their *Economic Surveys* as well as in *Starting Strong* I and as such surprising. The report does not include the OECD comments, nor is the EU ever mentioned in the argumentation for or against the benefit.[182]

The fourth phase is when the current government chose to reduce the cash-for-care benefit by a month and decrease the monthly amount. In this phase I find no comments on international advice or critique to credit or discredit the cash-for-care benefit. Although the advocates of the scheme opposed this change, it does not seem to have caused a huge debate (St.tid 2005-2006), perhaps because the change is essentially too small. Should the government, as discussed in its government declaration from 2005, abolish or reform the scheme more fundamentally, it is likely to result in harsh debates.

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[182] The only time EU and/or EEA is mentioned is regarding the question of whether foreign workers´ children living outside Norway have a right to *kontantstøttte* or not. In early reports this question is not clarified (e.g. Innst. S. Nr. 94 2001-2002: 2). In the end, however, this right also included this group. Today, children of for instance construction workers from new EU members working in Norway have a legal right to the cash-for-care benefit (see www.nav.no for more information). On this issue we seem to witness a development in the understanding of how the EEA Agreement also has consequences for national welfare schemes. Another example of how the EEA agreement has such consequences is the right to receive child benefit Cf. also Leibfried and Pierson (1995: 55).

Overall, the analysis shows that references to IOs are absent while "international experiences", most prominently developments in Finland, are used to a considerable extent. There may be different explanations for the non-use of IOs in debates. As Berven (2005) suggests, it could be too early and IOs may simply not be regarded relevant at the time of the debates. The use of and references to IOs is probably more likely the longer international advice has been issued and within family policy this is still rather new. The analysis suggests that politicians, probably with some justification, consider Norway to be a forerunner in terms of gender equality and provision of family policy arrangements (e.g. Norwegian interview 7).[183] As such, it is natural that they frame the debate as an ideological left-right conflict rather than a "compliance with international standards" debate. Contrary to what my first assumption says, one could also ask whether referring to IOs as a way of strengthening one's argument would be useful for Norwegian politicians in a domestic welfare context. Neither the EU nor the OECD is known to have much social policy, so it is questionable whether actors would improve their position among Norwegian voters by quoting organizations often considered to be neo-liberal or even anti-welfare (Deacon 2007). And governments divided in the issue of European integration and future membership, as the current government is, are probably less likely to refer to the EU (Hay and Rosamond 2002). Here it may be relevant to repeat that opponents of the cash-for-care benefit were on the political left wing, i.e. parties usually not expected to defend what many consider neo-liberal IOs. This indicates the multidimensionality of these family policies. Moreover, while the childcare issue has been treated in several specific reviews with later publications, the cash-for-care scheme has mainly been criticized through the *Economic Surveys*. Although the *Economic Surveys* are more authoritative, it may be that family policy related criticism "drown" in a survey focussing mostly on economics. And, as in Germany, interviews show that bureaucrats are more familiar with the reviews and advice by international actors than politicians (Norwegian interview 6, 7 and 9).

[183] Other sources which underline this are the debates on gender equality. There exists at least two such debates: (Barne- og familieministerens redegjørelse om likestillingspolitikk i 1997 and 1999). The following quote from another debate says the same; "(…) other countries practically flock to Norway to see and learn what we have done within gender equality" (Espen Johnsen, DNA, St.tid. 2007-2008: 1380).

If the current government's policy of reducing the cash-for-care benefit is not thought to be a result of international critique, can the introduction of the benefit itself ten years ago be seen as a result of learning from foreign experiences? More research is needed to decide conclusively on these issues of how Finland and Norway may have learned from each other, and that would be beyond the scope of this analysis. I may at least conclude that if there was any foreign influence on the introduction of, and later changes in, the Norwegian cash-for-care benefit, it was the result of bilateral connections, not advice from IOs.

8.3.2 Childcare

An analysis of the childcare issues could take many phases for its point of departure. Full coverage has been a goal across party lines for years, perhaps with the exception of the Progress Party (FrP) (Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2007b: 176). The years 2000, 2003, 2005 and 2007 have all been pointed out as the year when this goal was to be met. Former Minister of Education and Research, Øystein Djupedal, calls the full coverage aim the oldest political promise in Norway (St.tid. 2006-2007: 1384). The difference between the parties is more on the means used for achieving this goal and what should be prioritised: full coverage first and then price reduction or both at the same time. This high degree of political consensus within childcare, e.g. the wish to reduce parental payment and increase the numbers of pedagogically educated personnel, might be one reason why the OECD (as I will show) is not used much to justify critique of governments or reform proposals. There is no need to convince the opposition, or the public for that matter, which in opinion polls stress the need for more childcare, when all are agree upon the aims. Moreover, while the OECD is very critical towards the cash-for-care benefit, it is mainly positive towards Norwegian childcare institutions. However, there are still possible entry points where politicians could gather legitimacy from international sources to argue for a specific view.

Since the focus on childcare has been such an important political issue over a long period, I analyze documents from 1999 onwards, not only those from around the recent extension from 2005 presented in section 8.2. This encompasses the period

following the first OECD study on childcare (ECEC launched in 1998) and allows me to see whether international recommendations are known, used in debates, and taken into consideration when policy makers develop policy. Moreover, this period includes some of the most important reforms on childcare. According to a report to the Storting, the implementation of the settlement on childcare (*barnehageforliket*) from 2003, which aims at creating more and cheaper childcare places, is the most comprehensive reform within childcare ever in Norway (St.Meld. nr. 28: 5).

The practice appears to be that when preparing official studies, regulations, propositions and reports to the Storting, the ministry includes an overview of possible international obligations, and foreign law and international experiences that could be relevant for the Norwegian law. Interviewed bureaucrats confirm this assessment (Norwegian interview 5 and 6). One example of this is the Daycare Institutions Act (Ot.prp. nr. 72 (2004-2005): Om lov om barnehager),[184] which has a section over three pages providing an overview of childcare practices in the EU and in OECD countries, as well as advice in reports from the OECD, the Council of Europe, the UN, and Sweden, Denmark and Finland. The bill says that there have been several working groups in the EU on the issues of childcare,[185] but that Norway has not taken part in their discussions. The goals identified by the EU are briefly mentioned (Barcelona targets), showing an awareness of what is going on in this field in the EU; however later discussions in the bill are not related to EU developments. Interviewed officials confirm that Norway reports to the EU on indicators such as childcare coverage (Norwegian interview 6). Actions by the OECD, however, are given both more space and closer consideration in the bill. The OECD´s *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy* is described and its view on Norwegian policy is presented. The bill mentions later national reforms, implicitly saying that Norway has now improved some of the areas criticized by the OECD earlier, for instance reduction of parental fees, increase in the number of available places, and initiation of more research on childcare (Ot.prp. nr. 72 (2004-2005): 20). The OECD criticism of Norway for having too few pedagogues in childcare institutions is the single point

[184] Ot.prp. nr. 76 (2002-2003): Om lov om endringer i lov 5. mai 1995 nr. 19 om barnehager (The changes in the Daycare Institutions Act) constitutes a similar example.
[185] On the European Commission Childcare Network, see Leira (2002).

most discussed, and in several parts of the bill this criticism is the point of departure for the discussion:

> "The report calls attention to how Norway has a substantially lower number of pedagogues than countries which are natural to compare with. In Sweden, Denmark and Finland two thirds of the employees are educated pedagogues whereas the corresponding number in Norway is about one third (Early Childhood Education and Care in Norway, Country Note, OECD 1999)" (Ot.prp. nr. 72 (2004-2005): 98).

All in all, the bill pays close attention to comments by international actors such as the OECD, the Council of Europe and the UN, as well as to some characteristics of neighbouring countries´ childcare policies. The same can be said about a committee appointed by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to discuss quality in childcare institutions as a way of helping the ministry in preparing the bill (BFD 2005). The committee report includes a chapter on international obligations and recommendations, presenting the views of international actors such as the UN, EU, OECD and Council of Europe. This as well as characteristics of Swedish, Danish and Finnish family policy are used extensively throughout the report. The experts argue that

> "International regulations and recommendations must be taken into consideration in Norwegian childcare policy. (…) the education-political trends we witness in the EU, OECD and in Europe, must have consequences for our childcare policy and our control of and attention to the childcare sector" (BFD 2005: 22).

Such international advice has clearly both served as a point of departure and guided the work of the committee. However, when discussed by the Parliamentary Committee on Family Affairs, references to the UN and other Nordic countries are most common. And although the plenary discussion on the bill (St.tid. 2004-2005a) discussed the issues in the written documents, there were no references to the OECD and few to international experiences at all.

Thus Norwegian politicians make fewer references to reports from international actors than do researchers and ministry officials writing preparatory documents for the MPs. This finding is not surprising since the latter need to be updated on international developments as part of their work. The finding is also in line with my findings from Germany (chapter 7) and for the debates on the cash-for-care benefit. Another difference between politicians and the bureaucrats and experts is that the former refer more often to the UN and less to expert organizations like the OECD. The UN enjoys an exceptionally high standing in Norway; nobody seems willing to question its decisions or recommendations (Østerud 2007).

For other policy documents, it varies even more. In the Reports to the Storting (St.meld/White Paper), the difference in number of references to and discussion of OECD studies is striking. Of the five White Papers on childcare issues between 1999 and 2007, two do not refer to the OECD or other international experiences at all (St.meld. nr 28 2003-2004, St.meld. nr. 28 2004-2005b). The one from 2003 (St.meld. nr. 24 2002-2003) has some references, but they are only gathered in one short section, while the two from 1999 and 2006 (St.meld. nr. 27 1999-2000, St.meld. nr. 16 2006-2007) have a number or at least use the OECD reviews throughout the report. The following excerpt illustrates how OECD reviews are used actively in the 2006 report:

> "Norway and the other Nordic countries are reviewed positively by OECD experts. (…) However, in the opinion of the OECD, Norway has high parental fees, no age groups are entitled to free places, many still have no childcare place, the proportion of trained teachers is low and there is little long term research (OECD 1999). Furthermore, it is presumed that the Christian objects clause could be a challenge for children with a different religious background. Since 1999 many more children have received a childcare place, the municipalities are obliged to provide childcare places, the parental fee is reduced with the maximal price, and research is strengthened. Moreover, the objects clauses of the Day Care Institutions Act and Education Act are being evaluated by the Bostadutvalg (*Bostad-commission, my addition*). Norway and other Nordic countries are also reviewed positively in the OECD-report Starting Strong II (OECD 2006d). At the same time it is commented that Norway is the only Nordic country without a legal right to childcare places" (St.meld. nr. 16 2006-2007: 19, my translation).

As the report, from which the excerpt is taken, is about lifelong learning, it focuses a lot on OECD comments on education and tests such as PISA. Still, the childcare reports are also discussed intensively.

The specific themes of White Papers cannot be the reason for this uneven variation in references to international experiences. All the reports deal with childcare issues that the OECD has criticized, so there should be no reason for not relating a presentation of Norwegian childcare policy to the OECD. One difference that may be significant is that the two reports taking the most direct issue with the OECD studies are the ones published in the same years as the OECD reports. The country note on Norway was published in 1999, and the final report from the *Starting Strong* project in 2006. Recent studies probably have greater chances of being used by national actors than older ones. A press release from 2006 on the *Starting Strong* II report is indicative of this (KD 2006b). It is entitled: "OECD-review commends Norwegian childcare policy". Lisbet Rugtvedt, state secretary in the Ministry of Education and Research, is quoted saying: "This shows that our childcare promise emphasizing full coverage and quality in kindergartens is right. There are still challenges, but it is reassuring to see that Norway is in the lead within childcare" (KD 2006b, see also KD 2006a).

The same pattern is evident for the parliamentary debates accompanying the five White Papers just mentioned. Politicians in the meetings in June 2000 (St.tid. 1999-2000, discussing St.meld. nr. 27 1999-2000) and April 2007 (St.tid. 2006-2007a, discussing St.meld. nr. 16 2006-2007) refer much to the OECD, experiences from other Nordic countries, and other international experiences. In the debates accompanying the three other reports (St.tid. 2002-2003, St.tid. 2003-2004, St.tid. 2004-2005b), there are no OECD references, although they also deal with issues that the OECD has criticized; coverage and parental fees for childcare places. These last three debates include some references to Sweden, a country whith a maximum limit on parental contributions.[186]

[186] I have not extensively analyzed ordinary debates on budgets. However, a first impression is that there are not many MPs who refer to the policy advice from IOs or individual countries. There could be a trend where there is a growing use of this from none in 2000 (St.tid. 2000-2001b) to almost half of the speakers in 2007 (St.tid. 2007-2008), but I cannot conclude with certainty. As an example, in the debate on 12.12.2007, Minister of Education, Bård Vegar Solhjell, confirms that he to pays great attention to foreign experiences when drawing conclusions on childcare issues (St.tid. 2007-2008: 1383).

Foreign experiences appear used particularly in two situations. First, as discussed, bills have a section on international issues. Second, MPs suggesting new policies often refer to experiences which other countries have had after having introduced policies of the kind the MP is proposing in Norway. The following statement by Øystein Djupedal, Socialist Left Party, is illustrative:

> "The maximum price is inspired by a similar arrangement in Sweden, which has been an outstanding success. Here all Swedish parents and parties take a positive attitude towards the maximum price and would not think of removing it. Our hope and belief is that using a maximum price in a couple of years will be just as obvious in Norway as it is in Sweden today, simply because this is the only guarantee that parents profit from our efforts" (St.tid. 2002-2003: 3277).

In debates on proposals for reducing the price level by introducing a maximum price, proposed for instance by the Socialist Left Party (St.tid. 2000-2001a) and by this party together with the Progress party (St.tid. 2001-2002b), the use of foreign models is very evident. Four out of six and six out of 17 MPs refer to the Swedish arrangement, using their experiences as an argument either in favour of or against the introduction of a Norwegian equivalent. Documents connected to these debates, e.g. the treatment of the proposal in the Parliamentary committee on family affairs (Innst. S. nr. 238), also refer to Sweden. Here the government also says directly that it is looking at the solutions in the Nordic countries on how to reduce parental contributions.[187]

8.4 Norway as exporter of family policy ideas

An interesting finding in chapter 7 is that Norway is barely mentioned or studied directly by Germany in their justification for reforms, even though Norwegian family policy is similar to Sweden's. Norway should be particularly interesting for Germany

[187] Another concrete example of how individual countries´ arrangements are used to argue for the need for an equivalent Norwegian reform, is the proposal from MP May-Helen Molvær Grimstad from 8. June 2006 (St.tid. 2005-2006: 2572). The MP from the Christian Peoples Party wants Norway to take inspiration from the Swedish *snabbhetspremie*, which makes sure that women giving birth to child number two shortly after the first one, will still receive parental leave allowance as if they had been working inbetween. Her proposal was not adopted.

since Norway´s family policy does not conform to only one model, but combines pieces from different models, both "conservative" and more "social democratic" characteristics. Ellingsæter (2003) refers to this as a dualistic family policy or a hybrid family policy model (see also Leira 1998, Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2007b, Skevik 2004). The cash-for-care benefit in Norway has been surrounded by arguments of "free choice" for parents. As Morel argue, this rhetoric "fits well with this principle of subsidiarity" (2007: 621), a main characteristic of a Bismarckian welfare state like Germany. German interviewees refer often to Scandinavian or Nordic experiences and sometimes to Norway (German interviews 2 and 3), but when being country specific, Sweden is most often mentioned. This could lead to the assumption that Norway has little influence on development of policy elsewhere and that Norway is not a core teacher or export country. One explanation could be that Norway does not participate to the same extent as Member States in EU social policy discussions (assumption 3). Another reason could be that many books and studies take the EU as their point of departure. Non-Members like Norway are thus more seldomly described and analyzed than Sweden, Denmark and Finland. However, this picture is not complete and the following analysis does not confirm such an interpretation.

Interviewed representatives from the Ministry of Children and Equality speak of an enormous interest for Norwegian family policy and that "(…) all countries wish to learn from Nordic countries, particularly Norway, which was the first to introduce a father's quota" (Norwegian interview 5). A booklet giving an overview on the rights of parents of small children in Norway is presented as the biggest export article of the ministry – and of Norway. The ministry reports many visits from foreign groups which want to learn more about the Norwegian model, at least 20 high level delegations each year in addition to the invitations to Norway to visit the same or other countries (Hole 2007). While this picture relies on information from actors who have an interest in presenting their work as important, it illustrates that Norwegian experiences are considered valauble by other countries. In the following, I focus on German initiatives since this country is of particular relevance for my study.

The latest example of contact between Norwegian and German authorities within family policy is the conference in October 2007 on the economic benefits of

equality and family policy.[188] The conference was organized together with the German Ministry of Family Affairs and took place in Berlin. The focus of the conference was how the two countries could learn from each other and promote the "win-win-strategy" of economic growth and better terms for families. The conference gathered high level politicians and bureaucrats from both countries. Arni Hole, Director General in the Ministry of Children and Equality, who also spoke at the conference, is quoted in a newspaper interview saying that "Germany wishes to adopt our vision; redistribution of work, care and power between the sexes" (Aftenposten 13.10.2007).

In June 2005 Norway hosted a visit from the German president and his delegation.[189] Exchange of experiences and to learn about reconciliation of work and family life was the purpose of the visit. Norwegian family policies such as the parental leave scheme, the father's quota, the cash-for-care benefit, childcare centres, gender equality policies, and new legislation on gender in boards, were among the topics being discussed. Challenges, such as a high level of part time work among Norwegian women and the highly gender segregated labour market, were also debated. One central goal seems to have been to describe the benefits of the Norwegian policies in terms of higher birth and female employment rates as well as economic productivity. The year after another German delegation visited Norway to inform themselves about Norwegian family policies (Gerhardsen 2006). The delegation, consisting not only of MPs from different political parties, but also representatives of the Family Ministry and the Chancellor's Office, had meetings with the Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud, the Family Committee of the Storting and the Norwegian Family Ministry.

Other examples of the interest in Norwegian family policies from German family policy actors are the contributions by Norwegian officials in meeting initiated by non governmental organizations. At the request of the Association of Catholic Families (Familienbund der Katholiken), Merete Wilhelmsen, Minister Counsellor at the embassy in Berlin, held a more informal speech at a seminar on cash-for-care benefits. The speech gave an overview of Norwegian experiences and was later printed

[188] "Bedriftsøkonomisk suksess med likestillings- og familiepolitikken"/ "Frauenförderung + Familienfreundlichkeit = Firmenerfolg".
[189] With assistance from some of my interviewees I have gained access to documents produced in connection with this visit.

in their newsletter (*Stimme der Familie*).[190] A similar meeting was organized by the Willy-Brandt Foundation in Berlin in 2004, where, among others, the Norwegian Family Minister of that time, Laila Dåvøy, gave a speech on how "gender equality brings more children – future with job and family".

What kind of exchange of experiences and learning is this suggesting? Is it rational and purposeful or incidental? Is it open or tactical? One could ask whether we witness a search for the best policy options offered by other actors (rational problem-solving) or more incidental as it can be when solutions wait for problems (Cohen, March and Olsen 1972, Kingdon 1995). I would argue that this looks like rational learning in the sense that the amount of information gathered by German actors is comprehensive, it is collected by different actors, and takes place over time. At the same time it does not seem to be used directly in argumentation for the need for reforms, but more as background information in Germany. Knowing that German policy makers informed themselves so much on Norwegian family policies, but as shown in the previous chapter, ultimately introduced a parental leave scheme more similar to the Swedish system, one could perhaps conclude that Swedish experiences were explicitly used while Norwegian experiences contributed to the direction.

The discussion above is meant to offer examples of how Norway has exported family policy ideas to Germany. Irrespectively of how important Norwegian lessons have been to Germany, it is interesting per se that the Ministry uses terms such as "export" specifically, e.g. in press releases or information at the Ministry webpage; "gender equality as export article" (BLD 2007a). Having established in earlier chapters that Germany has adopted a Scandinavian kind of family policy, I have considered it particularly interesting to depict efforts to export policy ideas to this country. However, many other examples could be mentioned of how Norway is trying to "sell" its policy to other countries, not only in Europe, but Asia and Africa alike. By conferring the web pages of the Ministry of Children end Equality one can get a quick overview of the most recent activities. Ministry officials have spoken on family policy in individual countries all over the world, in meetings of the UN, Council of Europe,

[190] Über Norwegische Erfahrungen mit dem Betruungsgeld. Familienbund der Katholiken. Berlin 11. September 2007. See also webpage www.familienbund.org: Familiebund der Katholiken (2007): Stimme der Familie, 54. Jahrgang, Heft 5-6/2007.

Nordic Council and EU, to name but a few organizations. One way of illustrating this could be to describe some of these contacts in more detail. However, a perhaps better way of doing this is to have a look at the strategy on Europe ("Europa-strategi") developed by the Ministry of Children and Equality (BLD 2007b, only available in Norwegian). This policy document describes the aims, means and reasons for the Ministry's involvement in European processes within family and gender equality policies.

First of all, it is made explicitly clear that the Ministry has an ambition of shaping the agenda and policies of the EU-countries (BLD 2007b: 3). The strategy document regards Norwegian policies on reconciliation of work and family life and gender equality to be products in demand which can be exported to the EU (BLD 2007b: 6). An overview of existing policies in the EU is given and it is said that some of the gender equality directives have made Norway change its policies as well, but generally Norway is depicted as a forerunner. EU-programmes and working methods are presented and it is emphasized how Norway must become part of these processes, to as large a degree as the EEA-agreement allows. The following quote sums up how interesting the Ministry thinks Norwegian policies are for the EU and how Norway can benefit from stronger cooperation:

> "In general, it is an interesting characteristic of the development that the EU seeks good practice for the establishment of a sustainable "European welfare state" which at the same time ensures competitiveness and where the combination of high employment, social security and high fertility is possible. The Nordic countries stand out positively. Norway is an interesting case and a potential conversation partner for policy development. This has allowed the minister to participate in the political debate during the informal ministerial meetings with colleagues from member countries, applicant countries and EFTA/EEA countries. The debate is interesting and useful in itself, but at the same time it gives good profiling and good reputation for Norway as a country leading the way. Speaking from experience; the better prepared, the better results in terms of being able to ensure that our interests are taken seriously, gain influence for our ideas, establish new connections and collaborators, be consulted later in the process and regarding future participation in EU informal ministerial meetings" (BLD: 2007b: 23).[191]

[191] There are a couple of ambiguities in the original source, see translated quote in the appendix.

It could also be mentioned that as part of the Norwegian government's strategy on Germany (UD 2007b) one wish to further develop the collaboration on family and gender equality policies. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (UD) has also initiated a *Norwegian Public Diplomacy Forum* ("Omdømmeforum") that "is a concrete follow-up on the strategies for enhancing Norway's image abroad". According to the ministry's webpage;

> "A good reputation is important for a country, and can create ripple effects that have consequences for everything from trade and tourism to investment and influence. A good reputation will enhance our chances of attracting tourists to Norway, improving Norwegian companies' market access, gaining acceptance for our political views and presenting Norwegian culture" (UD 2007c).

I will not follow this thread any further. The point is simply that there is a clear conception among the authorities that a positive image increases Norwegian influence and that export of family policy ideas is one way of strengthening Norway's image.[192]

Relating the discussion of Norway's role as an exporter of family policies to the advice of the EU and OECD sheds light on the influence of international organizations in an interesting way. Germany is planning to introduce a cash-for-care scheme within 2013 against OECD-advice. This shows that even direct and crystal clear advice of the OECD not to introduce a certain allowance is ignored. Instead, it might illustrate how policy is shaped when developed as a compromise between political parties. The German coalition government decides to pass reforms on childcare, parental leave and cash-for-care almost at the same time, by researchers seen as contradictory. Sweden is doing a similar thing by introducing a *kontantstøtte* many fear will lead to a stronger traditional division of work between men and women and at the same time a gender equality bonus (tax benefit) to make parents share the parental leave period more equally. A very rational reason may explain this seemingly contradictory and paradoxical policy development; the effort to satisfy both parties to the right and left.

[192] Cf. Marcussen (2002: 212-213) for a short discussion on how Denmark also wishes to be seen as a forerunner and model to others in order to gain general influence.

This interpretation is supported by newspaper articles (e.g. FAZ 2007b).[193] In Norway, whether the state should support a dual earner or the more traditional one-income family model has been a cleavage for many decades as a left-right disagreement (Bay 1988, Håland 2001). And the disadvantages of introducing a cash-for-care benefit are definitely known among German policy makers. As shown in chapter 7, Norwegian experiences were referred to in the debates on the introduction of the scheme in Germany. Interviewed Norwegian Ministry officials also confirm that information about this welfare arrangement has been conveyed through mutual seminars and study visits in Oslo and Berlin (Norwegian interview 5). The German press has also discussed the Norwegian benefit, e.g. Tagesspiegel (2007a), concluding that mainly immigrants and low-income families use this benefit and that it has negative effects for gender equality.

Admittedly, as stated in section 8.1 on international family policy advice, the EU is different from the OECD and names the Finnish cash-for-care benefit best practice. The EU may in this instance be equated with Germany; the whole *European Alliance for the Family* was invented during their Presidency and this leads to the question of whether the German family minister here may have tried to have the EU make way for another German reform. In the words of one high level EU bureaucrat on Germany's actions during its presidency in the first half of 2007; "(…), we have a very activist Germany who wants to benefit from the European debate in order to also encourage change in its own constituencies" (EU interview 1). However, as established in the previous chapter, the family ministry originally opposed this scheme and can thus hardly be accused of up loading national policy priorities to the EU.

Overall, although data is patchy, the German study trips, the Norwegian contributions in meetings and conferences around the world including the EU, the presentation of Norway in the OECD *Babies and Bosses* series (volume 5) and EU studies as examples to follow and interviews and analysis of Norwegian policy documents, make assumption three seem less plausible. Not being a member of the EU does not decouple Norway totally from EU learning arenas and still allows this

[193] „Angela Merkel tries to calm critics to her left and right by giving something to all: Yes to extension of day-care. Yes to a legal right for a day-care place. Yes to a cash-for-care benefit for families preferring to raise their children at home. Stop nagging – there is enough for all, is the slogan" (FAZ 2007b, my translation).

country to serve as an example to follow. Asked directly about this, one knowledgeable respondent confirmed that this is more in line with her understanding (Norwegian interview 5). From this analysis it seems clear that Norway is an important "teacher" to other countries. This might indicate that EU and OECD are still too weak to be real mediators within family policy. Individual countries such as Germany are aware of and still go directly to well known countries representing best practice more than to organizations.

8.5 Import and export of cross border ideas

What does an analysis of recent reforms and Norwegian efforts to export its policy lessons tell us about the importance of the OECD and the EU for national policy – making in Norway? Although interviewed bureaucrats and politicians confirm that they are aware of the policies of international actors, they do not describe them as influencing Norwegian family policy (Norwegian interview 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9). For the EU, MPs say that they use the good arguments they find (Norwegian interview 4). This means that EU reports are sometimes drawn upon to support an argument, and that IOs are used to confirm ideas already present among policy makers. However, interviewees strongly emphasize how the international aspect is always considered; "Regardless of what we are working on, we have an eye to international law, all conventions, legislation of Nordic countries, EU directives and other countries´ practice" (Norwegian interview 5).

All political parties make use of international advice, critique and experience to justify and legitimize their own view. The government sometimes cites the OECD in support of their own policy. For instance, Former Minister of Education and Research, Øystein Djupedal, emphasizes the OECD´s positive evaluation of Norwegian childcare policy. He does not mention, though, that the OECD has been critical of some of the weaknesses criticized also by Norwegian opposition parties, e.g. lack of educated personnel (St.tid. 2006-2007b: 1384). Instead, he merely says that the government will focus on the qualifications of those working within childcare. Perhaps somewhat

surprising, no MPs from opposition parties refer to OECD reports when criticising the government for the lack of skilled persons in public childcare institutions.

Furthermore, I have been unable to find any instances where politicians question the reviews of, critique of and advice on Norwegian family policy made by international actors.[194] In the scholarly literature, international bodies are sometimes criticized for having an instrumental and economic approach to family policy (e.g. Lister 2006, Mahon 2006), something with which national politicians could have taken issue. But as said above, representatives of all political parties rely on the OECD, as well as other international sources. In St.meld. nr. 16 (2006-2007), the Norwegian Government's White Paper on early intervention for lifelong learning, the government accepted all challenges that the OECD identified. How the government is working to address these challenges is also presented. These challenges are treated one by one in chapter 6 of the report and the solutions are in line with OECD suggestions.[195] However, as discussed in the chapter on OECD, this organization to a large extent relies on background reports written by the reviewed countries when issuing recommendations.

It is difficult to give a clear account of the extent to which international advice, critiques, and experiences are used in Norwegian family policy-making. Counting the numbers of references in a debate, for instance, does not really capture the importance that international relations have played. How should one count? Should one compare the numbers of speakers referring to such sources with the number of speakers not referring to them as I have done several times in this chapter and in the one on Germany?[196] Or could the number of references perhaps be compared with the number

[194] There are probably some examples of this in other fields, e.g. the OECD advice to cut the benefit levels for sick and disabled and the wish to introduce tuition fees in institutions of higher education. See for instance St.meld. nr. 16 (2006-2007): 89. However, the role as an ideational authority could be exemplified by reference to the PISA-study. While the disappointing results for Norwegian pupils have been heavily discussed, few have questioned the study in itself (Lindbekk 2008, Christie 2008). In this way IOs may help reformers step over the discussion on whether reform is needed and start discussing *how* and *when* questions instead.

[195] A power point presentation by a bureaucrat in the Ministry of Education and Research from 26.9.2008, gained access to through an interview, supports this. Here the challenges identified by the OECD are presented together with the government's plans. The consistency is almost 100 percent.

[196] One example of this would be Nedergaard´s (2006) study of learning processes in the EU and Nordic Council of Ministers where he awards each country one point each time it is mentioned as a tutor by respondents filling out a questionnaire. Although I recognize that problems of interpretation are less critical when points are assigned on the basis of written, specific questions on which countries have been most important tutors, I find it unfortunate that Nedergaard does not discuss possible challenges when drawing conclusions based on such

of references to more national sources, such as commissioned studies or independent research?[197] To quantify in this way would give only a limited picture, as frequency is not the same as significance (Scott 1990: 32). I have thus reported this kind of figures a few times only to give the reader an impression of what I mean when saying that international experiences are used a lot or a little in a certain report or debate.

It is even more difficult to find proof of actual influence on policy-making. While developments in the EU and OECD, as well as their critique and praise, are well known, they do not seem to have had a big impact on actual policy. When asked which organizations have had influence, politicians mention the Nordic cooperation through the Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) and the Council of Europe (Norwegian interview 4, 7, 8). These organizations were especially important in the early developments of Norwegian family policy in the 1970s and onwards, i.e. long before the recent reforms of the cash-for-care benefit and full childcare-coverage that I focus on. However, as interviewees refer to these organizations as influential, I will now present them briefly.

Nordic cooperation enjoys great support among the electorate. Norwegians will probably have a positive attitude towards experiences drawn from neighbouring countries. This might partly explain the more extensive reference in debates and documents to Sweden, Denmark and Finland than to international organizations. But there can be no doubt that Norway has always been truly inspired by neighbour countries. According to one interviewee, Norway has copied Swedish arrangements since the 1970s. It was very customary and marketable at that time to refer to Sweden and its policies and experiences (Norwegian interview 4), and my analysis of documents and parliamentary debates shows that the trends continue. These references to Sweden are not surprising, as Norway has learnt a lot from Sweden within other social policy fields (Ervik forthcoming 2009, Haavet 1999a, Kuhnle 1978, 1996, Pedersen 2004, Stjernø 2005).

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numbers, although he admittedly mentions that one could learn from multiple countries (2006: 429). I argue that being mentioned most times in a parliamentary debate at least is no final evidence of being the most central tutor. Bleses, Offe and Peter (1997) is another example of a study counting and classifying arguments.

[197] Lundqvist (2007) provides an example of a study of the role of knowledge and ideas introduced through national expert commissions in development of national family policy. She concludes that such commissions played a crucial role for the shaping of Swedish family policy, a role much more important than the OECD and EU may be said to play in the Norwegian context.

Nordic cooperation has a long history.[198] The Nordic Council is a forum for Nordic parliamentary cooperation, in which MPs from the five Nordic countries and three autonomous areas (the Faroe Islands, Greenland, the Åland Islands) have met regularly since 1952. Twenty Norwegian MPs are members of this inter-parliamentary body. In all, 87 representatives, reflecting the political composition of their national parliaments, work together in cross-border party groups, with meetings five times a year. The Council has five committees, also meeting five times a year, and some of them deal with family affairs. The Nordic Council of Ministers has been the correspondent body for governmental cooperation since 1972. In reality, it consists of several individual councils of ministers, responsible for instance for gender equality and social affairs, who usually meet twice a year. All decisions must be unanimous. Its working mode is partly similar to that of the OMC in the EU; it focuses primarily on the exchange of best practice and learning without sanctions (see also Nedergaard 2006). The Nordic Council initiates a lot of research on family policy and gender equity issues, and has for instance funded projects on fertility and reconciliation of work and family life.[199]

The Council of Europe[200] is organized partly like the Nordic cooperation. It has a Committee of Ministers, which is the decision-making body, and a Parliamentary Assembly with 636 representatives from 47 national parliaments. There are ten committees (each MP is member of one), e.g. on *Social, Health and Family Affairs* and on *Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*. Like the Nordic Council, the MPs reflect the political composition of their national parliaments. Norway has 10 members, five representatives and five substitutes. Also similar to the Nordic mode of cooperation, the Council of Europe has cross-border party groups for the MPs.

Both the Nordic Council and the Council of Europe are organizations in which MPs meet, while the OECD is more of an expert organization. This difference might influence politicians when asked about which organizations play a role in Norwegian family policy development. Naturally, they may both remember and know better when

[198] This presentation is based on information available on the website of the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers; http://www.norden.org. For an academic approach, see e.g. Petersen (2006) or Solem (1977).
[199] See Carlsen (1998) for an example of the role of the Nordic Council as mediator and forum for discussion.
[200] This presentation is based on information available on the website of the Council of Europe; www.coe.int See Deacon, Hulse and Stubbs (1997: 82-84) for a short scholarly introduction to this organization.

ideas are transmitted across borders through these forums. One interviewed politician says that since Nordic countries are so similar, it is easy to exchange experiences. The benefit of the Nordic Council, according to the same interviewee, is that one is brought up to date on knowledge and expertise; "We update each other at every meeting of the Nordic Council, on what is going on in the different countries. Of course, this influences us" (Norwegian interview 8). In this politician's opinion, the Nordic Council has a much larger impact on Norwegian discussion and development of family policy than the EU and OECD. While this assessment might describe historical development of social policy particularly well, interviewees also consider these organizations to be important today. This is interesting as discussions on globalization and the EU have included concerns about the decline of the Nordic welfare states and a coming non-importance of bodies such as the Nordic Council. As my analysis shows, Norwegian politicians and bureaucrats actually listen to fellow Scandinavians more than to the EU and OECD.[201] Nonetheless, as one politician succinctly says; "We use the OECD cynically when it fits the policy" (Norwegian interview 8). While this response illustrates a tactical use of foreign policy advice, it says little about the real influence of the OECD. Other interviews suggest that this is more uncertain:

> "After we had a team here, they issued their so called country note where they pointed at some challenges they meant Norway had. We ourselves had also pointed at some challenges in the background report. We quote them in official documents such as budgets and propositions to the Odelsting (odelstingsproposisjoner, my addition). We include their view in the argumentation. The OECD is an organization the Norwegian government listens to. That does not necessarily mean that one follows all their advice in national policy-making, but it is clear that the OECD is a "heavy" organization" (Norwegian interview 6).

[201] This is based on a limited number of interviews. My informants ascribe little importance to the EU and OECD and some to the Nordic Council and Council of Europe, but this is not the same as saying that the latter two were very important. According to Hantrais and Letablier, EU documents did not mention families until 1974. The Council of Europe, however, did this more than a decade earlier (1996: 139-140). Moreover, EU advice on family policy is much more recent, less than a decade. In other words, the EU, and I could add the OECD, are latecomers in the field of family policy, and it is thus not strange that Norwegian interviewees hardly refer to these two organizations as influential. It could also be mentioned that the NCM has had activities in Germany. In 2005 NCM organized a seminar in Berlin on the topic of "Can Working Life and Family Life be Combined to Promote a Sustainable Economic and Social Development in the Nordic Countries and Germany?" (cf. http://www.norden.org/internationellt/uk/nmr_tyskland.asp?lang=6). More research and interviews could shed light on this interesting aspect.

The same interviewee says that OECD recommendations can support an argument, but is uncertain whether these recommendations have made the government do anything it would not otherwise have done (Norwegian interview 6). When asked about the impact of OECD reports, an interviewee with the OECD gave a similar statement, saying that it depends a lot on how a country wants to use them (OECD interview 5). A Norwegian interviewee says that the existence of a lot of national studies and evaluations might reduce the need for consulting international studies. Moreover, Norway has moved towards a family policy based on full coverage of childcare for such a long period that it is not something policy makers need to justify to the voters (Norwegian interview 6). The only direct reference to a study by an international organization from a politician is the PISA and PIRLS studies. This politician refers to the way in which such studies justify the policy of full coverage of childcare centres, as childcare has a positive effect on reading skills (Norwegian interview 9).[202]

While there are more or less no references to the EU in written documents, and especially not in parliamentary debates, interviews reveal that Norway is involved in some of the EU family policy meetings (Norwegian interview 5 and 6). That the interviewees are well aware of the aims set at the level of the EU is clear (Norwegian interview 6). Still, this does not mean that these aims influence Norway. In an interview focussing on social politics in general and avoidance of poverty and social exclusion more specifically, the interviewee says that it is not accurate to say that Norway is heavily inspired by the EU countries, mostly because Norway is a step ahead of them (Norwegian interview 3). Paraphrasing López-Santana (2006: 488), international actors should not have the power to frame family policy problems because Norwegian policies already are largely compatible with EU and OECD identified goals. There is little misfit, to use the vocabulary of Börzel (2003), also because the EU has so little official family policy. This supports assumption two, saying that Norway is more of an exporter than importer of family plicy ideas.

[202] Here it should be said, though, that this interview was conducted within two weeks of the publishing of one of these reports, something which might have made the respondent think of exactly this report. However, this is a general problem when conducting interviews, and the same argument, but without the reference to OECD-tests, was made several times in the parliamentary debates.

A similar impression comes from the reports from the Ministry of Trade and Industry (NHD) on Norway's relations with the Lisbon strategy. In general, the reports say that Norway and the other Nordic countries have been successful in reaching economic growth and a high level of welfare at the same time (NHD 2007). Just as family policy does not enjoy the most prominent place in the OMC reports, Norwegian policies in that area also take a back seat in the ministry reports. That this ministry is responsible for the report could be read as a sign that neither family nor social policies in general are its main concerns.[203] However, the reports include these policies and discuss Norway's status on EU-identified goals, e.g. in the area of female employment, which is said to be achieved by a good margin (NHD 2007: 40, 161). The report says full childcare coverage is an important way of promoting female employment, and although the Barcelona targets are not mentioned directly, the reports give the coverage rate for different age groups (2007: 47-48). The 2003-report mentions the Barcelona targets in a presentation of the EU goal setting but with no discussion of Norway's goal attainment (2003: 57). High birth rates are also emphasized, again in comparison with EU countries (2006: 20, 2007: 46), and the same with parental leave schemes (NHD 2007: 48). The importance of having a well-developed family policy is illustrated and justified by means of a comparison of reasons for not being in the work force (NHD 2007: 166). The conclusion is clear and worth quoting at length:

> "One may analyse the high employment rate more closely by looking at reasons for non-participation in the labour market. The difference in non-participation in the labour market between the Nordic region and the EU is primarily associated with female nonparticipation in the labour market, and hereunder mainly with non-participation referable to personal reasons, family responsibility or other reasons that are not related to illness. At the same time, the Nordic region has been at the forefront in facilitating the combination of childcare and working life through, among other things, government day-care centres and paid parental leave schemes. All the Nordic countries are operating flexible working life schemes to facilitate the combination of working life and family life. A report from the Nordic Council of Ministers refers to Nordic experience with paternal leave, and the consequences thereof in terms of promoting equal opportunities, (...) and concludes that, in particular, the paternal

[203] The reports have little or no information on the process of making the reports. Obviously, the Ministry for Trade and Industry is in charge, but to what extent other ministries or bodies are involved is unclear and would be an interesting question to pursue. Has for instance the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a role here?

> leave schemes for fathers in the Nordic countries have played a positive role in equal opportunity terms" (NHD 2007: 165, my emphasis).

The report says that Norway is cooperating with the EU in gender issues, and mentions some family policy related aims briefly, such as shared responsibility for care and housework (2003: 20). It stresses that when Norway and the EU carry out similar policies, it is not the result of the Lisbon Strategy, but more of shared political objectives: "Employment, environment and macroeconomic stability have all been on the Norwegian agenda since long before the EU formulated its strategy" (NHD 2004: 18, also 2003: 7). Moreover, the reports do not have the character of a policy-driving document but rather of a report on what has been done independently of the EU initiatives. Still, they prove that Norwegian governments are both informed of, and to a certain extent use, work by the EU to compare and evaluate national social policy. That this is an important aim of the report series is beyond doubt: "(…) parts of the text of the present report may be used to compare Norwegian policy with the measures adopted by the EU countries under the Lisbon Strategy" (NHD 2007: 23).

As emphasized here and in other chapters, one must not forget that the OECD adjust its reports to what it thinks is needed not to have its advice rejected: "(…) they (*the OECD, my addition*) are attentive, they are not stupid, they want to be an actor" (Norwegian interview 3, confirmed also in OECD interview 2, 5 and 6). This is perhaps expressed most clearly in this statement from an OECD official; "We sit together with x (*name taken out in order to preserve anonymity*) and her staff and we go through the whole draft and a lot of it is factual corrections, but also some different way of expressing things, but we come to a mutual agreement, so it's really their report which we've drafted, but the government stands by the report" (OECD interview 6). Later, the same interviewee says "Well, if somebody has a problem with this survey, we can't publish it". Similarly, the OECD can be used by the country under review, as another expert said in an interview on poverty and pensions policy; ´especially the Ministry of Finance uses this (*OECD-reports, my addition*) as the devil's advocate to say what they are not allowed to say` (Norwegian interview 1, also confirmed in OECD interview 6 and indicated by Kildal and Kuhnle 2004a). The interesting

question is perhaps not "how domestic is domestic politics?" (Kayser 2007). The question remaining is rather "how international is international advice really?" The discussion above suggests that the Norwegian debates on family issues are oriented mainly towards national issues. When an issue is politicised, such as the cash-for-care benefit, it is unimportant what IOs such as the OECD says. Ideas spread, but the extent to which they manifest themselves in concrete policy, depends on the national context. This seems to be the case also for family policy, even though veto players and vested interests are less dominate in this than in other social policy fields.

8.6 Conclusion

As chapters 5 and 6 argue, EU and OECD initiatives are comprehensive enough to influence national reform processes. In this chapter, I set out to investigate the potential impact on Norwegian family policy, more precisely the cash-for-care benefit and extension of childcare. The analysis was guided by some assumptions. The first stated that the power of ideas is strengthened if they are accepted by and further disseminated by influential IOs and I expected to find at least some concordance between international family policy ideas and national policies. My analysis showed that policies were in concordance, but not because of the international advice and the cash-for-care benefit illustrates that national politics are more important than international policy ideas. The second assumption said that policy ideas from IOs did not play a crucial role for the development of Norwegian family policies and that policy export was more pertinent that policy import. This was confirmed in my analysis. Third, not being a member of the EU and thus at least partly decoupled from an important arena for exchange of information, I assumed this export role to be modest. This was partly rejected, as for instance Germany paid close attention to Norwegian policies before reforming their own. I now elaborate on these findings.

While the high degree of correspondence between the advice of IOs and Norway's family policy could give the impression of IO influence, most national actions and setting of targets precede the international advice. The building of new childcare facilities and the goal of a childcare place for all is an old goal, towards

which different governments have worked with different deadlines. Similarly, the analysis has shown how the critique of the cash-for-care benefit is not something first raised by international actors. Two of the current parties in government, Labour and the Socialist Left Party, strongly opposed the reform when it was legislated some ten years ago. These parties had already raised issues such as setbacks for gender equality, reduced female employment, or a further disadvantaging of immigrant children. If there has been any influence in this case, it is probably that the political left has made the OECD aware of this critique. To say that the political left parties in Norway influence the OECD, however, would be inaccurate. To the OECD it is above all a question of economic incentives and effectiveness, coinciding here with issues like integration. Left-wing parties are in addition sceptical towards a traditional conservative family model. Thus, left parties and the OECD (often considered neo-liberal) have coinciding critiques, but with partly different motives.

All in all, and contradictory to my first assumption of how IOs should strengthen the power of ideas, Norwegian policy makers barely refer to such organizations. This could indicate that the OECD is not thought to bring more legitimacy or support for the policies in question. Moreover, comparing interview statements and national background reports with the policy lessons of the OECD, indicates that the OECD largely relies on the information, analysis and interpretations of the national government. One could thus ask whether the OECD recommendations are really national priorities, given increased authority by sending them via an international organization (uploading).

It is an interesting finding that Norwegian actors keep their policies despite clear advice from the OECD to change the cash-for-care allowance. Countries like Germany and Sweden seem to disregard the same advice. There is obviously room for national politics in a globalized world (Kildal and Kuhnle 2007). Still, with the exception of the harsh and consistent critique of the cash-for-care allowance, the IOs seem to be rather pleased with Norwegian family policies. Since Norway in many regards has good social policy and best practice, finding proof of strong international influence on recent Norwegian family policy reforms is difficult. This interpretation is very much in line with the second assumption: that Norway is more of an exporter

than an importer since there has been less need for the importing of policies to Norway the last two decades.

Still, claiming that international organizations and experiences have been without importance for Norway is not correct. Although the EU and OECD have not played a major role in the development of Norwegian family policies, learning and organizations still matter. Interviews with Norwegian politicians and civil servants reveal that the Nordic Council and Council of Europe have been more important than EU and OECD, particularly in the earlier phases of the development of family policies. The establishment of meeting places for the "like-minded" creates a sort of "cognitive dynamics".[204] In other words, ideas are formulated, evaluated and transmitted. Although the effect of this is hard to measure, ideas are nonetheless continuously put into circulation and may have an impact. Policy makers have probably always learned from each other, but the new arenas for mutual exchange within IOs systematize this learning process.

That politicians regard Nordic cooperation and the Council of Europe as more influential than the EU and OECD is interesting. Denmark and Sweden are pioneers within family policy, with Norway following later (Leira 1998: 365, Sainsbury 2001, Ellingsæter 2003: 424, Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2007a: 651, Grødem 2008: 14). For instance, childcare coverage, particularly of children less than three years old, has been substantially lower in Norway than in Denmark and Sweden (Sainsbury 2001: 114, Ellingsæter 2003: 438, Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2007b: 172). However, in the last 20 years, Norway has moved towards policies that help parents reconcile work and family life, including shared parenthood, as opposed to the traditional one-income family (Grødem 2008). Whether this "catching up" and "Scandinavian convergence" (Ellingsæter 2003: 439) partly results from Scandinavian best practice and learning through the Nordic Council or other bodies is a subject for future research.[205] Some traces of influence, however, are evident. The maximum parental payment for childcare is inspired by Sweden (Ellingsæter 2003: 439, St.tid. 2000-2001a, 2001-

[204] This term is not my own and is used both in psychology and political science, though in different ways. See for instance Mondak (1993).
[205] Haavet (2006) briefly mentions such issues. According to her, Norway took the lead in family policy in the first decades of the 20th century while Sweden obtained hegemony from the 1930s onwards.

2002b). Precisely how large the impact of Swedish family policy upon Norway has been historically is less clear.[206] There is also widespread knowledge of and interest in international trends within the Norwegian bureaucracy. Like in Germany, this applies not so much to politicians, but for administrative personnel it is the case.

Assumption one, saying that the power of ideas is strengthened if they are accepted by and further disseminated by influential IOs, has been almost completely disproved in the Norwegian case as the EU and OECD are barely used to defend or attack family policies. Assumption two, however, saying that Norway is more of an exporter of ideas than an importer, has been correspondingly confirmed in the sense that Norway seems to have imported few, if any, family policy ideas from these organizations. This interpretation has been somewhat moderated by the Nordic Council and the Council of Europe, neither of which I study in detail, but where more in depth research is needed. What about the last assumption about the degree of export?

Not being a member of the EU means that Norway is not participating in learning processes to the same extent as Member States. As suggested by my third assumption, this could mean that Norwegian "lessons" are not exported even though Norway scores high on indicators such as fertility or female employment rates. My empirical findings contradict this assumption; although Norway is not referred to very often in German policy documents, I have shown that Germany is well aware of Norwegian experiences.

What does the analysis tell us about the analytical value of the idea perspective and focus on voluntary advice from IOs? First, that ideas from the EU and OECD do not seem to have had an influence on Norwegian family policy does not mean that such ideas are unimportant. The need for importing ideas was small, as Norway's policies were more or less already compatible with EU and OECD advice (the cash-for-care benefit being the one important exception). These organizations even present policies of the Norwegian kind as best practice. Indeed, the EU and OECD have learned from Nordic countries, not the other way around. Thus, Norway is not a case

[206] For literature on how Norwegian family policy historically has developed under influence of foreign models, see for instance Hinnfors (1992), Haavet (1999a-b, 2006), Stjernø (2005), Lundqvist (2007).

well suited to illustrate policy transfer from IOs, but rather an interesting potential policy exporter. The process whereby characteristics of Nordic family policy became the best practice of IOs would be interesting to study in itself. Moreover, both bureaucrats and politicians reveal that they have been made aware of foreign policy arrangements through other international organizations, namely the Nordic Council and Council of Europe, as well as individual countries like Sweden. International advice on family issues might become an important source for learning in some years when the advice has been issued longer and perhaps gained a stronger position.

Second, interviews and parliamentary debates have shown that ideas developed in one context are applied in another (cf. Dolowitz 2000a-b). Such learning is visible when MPs propose new measures that have already been introduced abroad. Whether they use these ideas to legitimize their own policies, or whether they actually propose new policies out of genuine conviction, is difficult to assess. If the former is right, then interests are the important factor, not ideas. As Bennett argues, ´The interests of the importer dictate the nature, timing and origins of evidence injected into policy debate` (1991: 31).

Third, and as already alluded to, politicians and bureaucrats use foreign ideas tactically, something that puts further emphasis on interest. Interviewed politicians openly say that they use international advice when it serves their purpose. According to other interviewees, bureaucrats also (mis)use the IOs in this way. Thus, it is hardly surprising that politicians refer to positive evaluations when it could give them credit. Relatedly, the strategy papers of different ministries clearly signal that Norwegian family policy and a general good reputation could be a means to improve our influence and gain acceptance for national political views. This is a clear expression of how interests are central. It adds to the idea-literature focussing on when ideas matter. This literature usually focuses on how characteristics of the idea itself or of the surroundings matter for the reception of an idea, above all focussing on when ideas are *imported* (e.g. Hall 1993, Stone 1999, Linos 2007). These authors barely discuss when ideas are *exported*. As shown in this chapter, ideas are not only exported to benefit the importing societies, but also tactically from a self-interested agenda in the exporting country. It is obviously important for Norway to be seen as having an innovative and

effective family policy; to "shine" and assert itself internationally. Interviewed representatives of the OECD suggest that several countries have such motives (OECD interview 5).

Today, a more recent trend could strengthen the wish of being considered a forerunner abroad. While welfare tourism has been seen as a big threat to national welfare states, countries such as Norway seem to have shifted fundamentally in their view on this.[207] Foreign workers who use welfare schemes like parental leave, child benefits or cash-for-care benefits are not seen as enjoying rights without contributing. To the contrary, these generous arrangements are actively used to attract foreign workers and their families. The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation (NAV) has made advertisement films in English, German and Polish describing such arrangement to attract these workers. The reason for the paradigmatic change is to find in a fear of lack of workers (BT 2007).

Some of the early Norwegian social insurance programmes were developed under the heavy influence of Germany, e.g. the paid maternity leave included in the health insurance act from 1909 (Kuhnle 1987: 81, Sainsbury 2001: 122, 127, Johansson 2003: 204-205). As the above discussion has shown, Norway learned a lot from neighbouring countries in the 20th century as well (Stjernø 2005, Haavet 2006). However, it seems that we have now come full circle in the sense that Germany is currently, at least to some extent, importing Norwegian lessons (Kuhnle 2007, Lindén 2007b).

[207] Off course, there are still critical voices. The Progress party (FrP) is for instance usually very sceptical regarding the potential misuse of Norwegian welfare schemes. For an outline of the welfare tourism argument, references and evaluation, see for instance Kvist (2004) or Dølvik and Eldring (2005).

Chapter 9 Conclusion: summary, findings and outlook

> "The policy music is composed in Paris (OECD) and played - with some adjusted European notes - in Brussels (EU)" (anonymous source within the German Federation of Trade Unions, DGB).

I have investigated the development, the content and transfer of the family policy ideas of two major international organizations. I have raised three sets of research questions: First, from a theoretical and methodological perspective, how and why can ideas matter for national family policy reforms? Second, how much and what kind of family policy ideas exist in IOs? Moreover, how do such IOs arrive at their prescriptions and how are these ideas transmitted to national policy makers? Third, to what extent can the reforms in German and Norwegian family policy be understood as being the result of the ideas promoted by IOs? How are international family policy ideas received and with what impact?

Studying the role of ideational factors in decision-making processes, I have taken foreign advice into account in the discussion of family policy reforms in Germany and Norway. While acknowledging the problem of measuring the influence of ideas, I have developed an approach allowing me to study this issue. Ideas are operationalized as the unbinding advice and views spread by the international organizations, the EU and the OECD. I have compared this advice with actual reforms (concordance method) and searched for traces of influence in policy documents, parliamentary debates and interviews with key actors (process tracing).

This concluding chapter summarizes the main findings and how these contribute to existing theory on policy change, social policy in international organizations, and national family policy reforms (section 9.1). This summary is organized around my three sets of research questions listed above. Furthermore, this chapter elaborates and develops some aspects of the findings. Section 9.2 contains a few reflections on my research design, while section 9.3 addresses questions I have not dealt with in detail and which I also suggest as topics for future research.

9.1 Summary of findings

My point of departure has been that family policy reforms could be particularly appropriate for the study of the impact of ideas. Family policy is a fairly "new", less saturated field in a phase of expansion rather than retrenchment (Bleses 2003, Gatenio-Gabel and Kamerman 2006, Kamerman and Gatenio-Gabel 2007, Lundqvist 2007, Morel 2007), and thus is less likely to be understood by exclusively focussing on economic constraints or predetermined paths. It is less institutionalized than areas like pensions, implying for instance that there are few interest organizations or other veto players in this area. However, family policy reforms have rarely been studied from an ideational perspective, although it is now increasingly applied in studies of family policy reforms (e.g. Bleses and Seeleib-Kaiser 2004, Larsen 2005, Kübler 2007, Krüger 2007, Stiller forthcoming 2009). Hardly any of these pay attention to international organizations. An idea-based approach is particularly pertinent when there is only voluntary exchange of ideas and no negative sanctions involved, as is the case regarding family policy advice from IOs. Moreover, as my study includes the EU non-member Norway, it is of particular interest to study to what extent, and prospectively how, ideas spread across borders independently of membership of organizations. Family policy is furthermore a field characterised by much change and continuous development of new arrangements, and has gained steadily more importance in elections and everyday politics (Dienel 2002). It is very interesting to investigate whether IOs such as the OECD and EU, traditionally seen as being without competence and importance in the area, now play a role in their Member States´ search for optimal domestic policy. To what extent has my investigation been able to move beyond previous research in the field?

First, how can my analysis of the family policy ´idea game` improve our understanding of the relationship between ideas and policy-making?

The analysis bears out that ideas should be incorporated into studies of welfare reforms because this perspective improves our understanding of decision-making processes which institutionalist accounts (path dependency), functional explanations

(internal and external problem pressure), and political factors (parties matter) cannot explain alone. The paradigmatic reforms of German parental leave and childcare will definitely result in increased social policy spending. Another issue which has recently been high on the agenda, illustrating that family policy reforms have not been about cost reduction, is the debate between the Social and Christian Democrats about whether to increase the child benefit by € 10 or to reserve the same money for further expansion of childcare facilities. The conflict between benefits in cash and kind is an important conflict dimension in both Germany and Norway and shows that the debate has focussed on *how* to use, rather than *whether* to use, public finances in family policies. Moreover, that a German government led by the Christian Democrats both increases the number of public childcare facilities and develops a new parental leave scheme, designed to speed up the return of women to work after childbirth and give men incentives for childrearing, tells us that "parties matter" theory just like problem pressure, is insufficient to understand the reforms. In the Norwegian case we witness the same openness towards increased family policy spending, especially within childcare, but leftist parties favour the expanding of benefits in kind more than bourgeois parties.

But is there a contradiction between crisis-driven reforms for retrenchment and reforms for a new and extended role of the state driven by ideas? One should note that an important point with focussing on ideas is how ideas may give policy makers a new understanding of the scope for action. The policy advice and views coming from IOs or other sources may convince policy makers that reform is necessary. The frame of a demographic crisis and the sustainability of the welfare state identified in chapters 5 and 6 are two examples. This means that there might have been no "objective problem pressure" to start with strong enough to make politicians reform social policy programmes. I would argue that reforms inspired by ideas rather than pure necessity are found in the field of family policy. Politicians are willing to increase budgets in this area in order to cope with challenges such as low fertility rates and to improve gender equity and child fostering. As such, it is different from retrenchment – reforms which aim at cutting spending. I argue that it makes sense to distinguish between crisis-driven reforms and reforms driven by ideas in the form of foreign policy advice.

Through the example of globalization, Hay and Rosamond explain why this is a relevant distinction:

> "Does it matter, then, whether the effects frequently attributed to globalization are direct products of the demonstrable 'material reality' of globalization or of more or less accurate constructions of globalization's assumed imperatives or of an entirely duplicitous appeal to globalization's convenient exigencies? While in one sense it may not (the immediate outcome, after all, is the same), in another the difference is extremely significant. In one account we identify an inexorable logic of economic compulsion operating beyond the control or purview of political actors whom we might hold accountable for its consequences. In the other two we have an open-ended, contingent and – crucially – political dynamic to which potentially accountable agents might be linked. Differentiating between the effects of globalization, on the one hand, and the effects of dominant discourses of globalization and the use made of such discourses, on the other, is, then, an integral aspect of restoring notions of political responsibility and accountability to contemporary political and economic dynamics" (2002: 150).

Focussing on learning partly overcomes the difficulty in "ideas matter" studies of distinguishing the effect of interests and problem pressure from ideas since the learning literature identifies conditions for when learning should take place, which includes interest seeking actors as well as actual problem pressure. This literature claim that ideas that can combine innovative programmes with solutions to acknowledged problems, and at the same time strengthen the position of those who are learning, have the best chances of being implemented. This may appear to be an inherent lack of logic in ideational theory; the theory first claims that ideas have an independent effect on policy-making, and then identifies policy failure, problem pressure, and supportive powerful actors as important for the success of the very same ideas. However, I understand *independent* as implying that ideas add something that interests or problem pressure alone cannot deliver. As shown in the analysis; it does not make sense to say that only ideas change policies. The possible success of ideas depends on actors and their role. My analysis shows that politicians and bureaucrats use foreign ideas tactically, something which puts further emphasis on interests. Policy makers interviewed openly say that they use international advice when it serves their

purpose. It is hardly a surprising finding that politicians refer to positive evaluations when it could give them credit. Still, it is obvious that ideas have been adopted not simply because they coincide with the importer's ideological perspectives.

Ideational approaches identify conditions beneficial for the success of ideas. While my work has relied on theoretical insights from other scholars, I wish to briefly highlight some features of my work that contribute to the theory on ideas and the welfare state, especially on debates on how and when ideas matter, an aim set out in chapter 1. Along with existing literature, I have found that policy failure is an important condition (and argument) for reform, and that government turnover and change in power relations are conducive to new policies. However, my analysis in chapters 5 and 6 suggests that peer review processes initiated by IOs may expose countries to new policy ideas and make them start looking for solutions even before problem recognition. It seems that what Bøås and McNeil (2004) call malleable ideas, that is ideas that are capable of "killing many birds with one stone", have particularly good chances of success. My analysis complements their research by pointing out how the example of the idea of family policy as a productive factor, where particular family policies are presented as beneficent for families, gender equality, the general economy, and the sustainability of the welfare state, is spread by IOs like the EU and OECD. Although it is not clear whether this idea originates in these IOs, this idea has been important in Norway and Germany and for the preparation of recent reforms.

In line with existing ideational theory is also the finding that governments are more likely to introduce policy changes when there is a consensus among experts, international organizations as well as national research communities, on which kind of policy is most efficient. As I have shown, Nordic family policies are praised by German and international researchers and by the EU and OECD. This consensus has probably made it easier to carry out the paradigmatic German reforms in the direction of Nordic family policies.

While Germany has been depicted as an importer of family policy ideas, Norway appears to be a family policy export country (though historically it has definitely imported family policy ideas from its Nordic neighbours). Policy documents from different ministries indicate that Norwegian family policy and a generally good

reputation are considered means to improve Norwegian influence and gain acceptance for national political views in other circumstances. This is a clear expression of how interests and ideas are coupled. Moreover, it adds to the ideas-literature by focussing on when ideas matter. This literature usually focuses on the characteristics of an idea itself, or of how the surroundings matter for the reception of an idea, above all focussing on when ideas are *imported* (e.g. Heclo 1974, Rose 1991, Goldstein and Keohane 1993, Hall 1993, Kingdon 1995, Stone 1999, Berman 2001, Blyth 2002, Marcussen 2002, Simmons and Elkins 2004). These authors barely discuss when ideas are *exported*. As shown in the chapter on Norway, ideas are not only exported to benefit the importing societies, but also tactically from a self-interested agenda in the exporting country. The wish to "shine" in international comparisons and improve its international position and image could be one reason.[208] Interviewed representatives of the OECD suggest that several countries have such motives. I find it interesting why Norway is so preoccupied with appearing as an example to follow within family policy. From where and why does the wish of having a family policy to export come from? This expressed wish and interest to export policies to other countries could be an interesting topic for a future study.

Second, has my analysis of international family policy ideas and their development challenged established knowledge on the social policy role played by IOs?

Until now, there have been few attempts to link the study of family policy reforms with that of international organizations. As such, my study of the relation between international organizations and domestic governments within family policy is new, and fills a gap in the literature. We have lacked systematic comparative knowledge on the role of international organizations in this field, especially the OECD. My analysis contributes to the literature on social policy, ideas and international organizations by emphasizing that the EU and OECD are becoming increasingly important actors. The

[208] Research on the discourse on goodness by Loga (2005) might be of relevance here. Loga has for instance written about politics based on moral authority and an image as being "good". The reason for presenting this "goodness image" could be a wish to be seen in an advantageous light which makes it easier to reach other political goals.

EU addresses family policy through new initiatives such as conferences and the *European Alliance for Families* while the OECD has special family policy review series. The argument I developed is that the family policy ideas of the EU and OECD add up to a rather comprehensive set of policy recommendations, especially within parental leave and childcare, with the potential of influencing national reforms, even in a field where they have no formal competence. While we have been accustomed to investigating social policy developments in a national perspective (Deacon 2007), we increasingly need to take international ideas into account when studying future social policy reforms, also in the field of family policy.

This view is at odds with scholars who claim that family policy is completely a national domain (e.g. Pfau-Effinger 2008). However, this finding should not be overestimated. International organizations, particularly the EU, still do not have a family policy but rather ideas on national family policy. Also, the influence of these ideas is, as shown and as will be returned to below, so far rather limited. As Armingeon argues, policy proposals have influence only when they do not conflict with the position of major domestic actors (2004: 236, 239). Still, my study challenges existing literature by showing that both organizations, to an increasing degree, take an interest in, and issue advice on family political issues.

Regarding the content of their family policy stance, I relied on the classification scheme developed by Campbell (1998, 2002). Although not without difficulties, this framework enabled me to give an overview of what kind of family policy views exist within the two IOs. I showed that the two IOs in question have a clearly instrumental approach to family policy, implying that they, in reality, address a number of issues when they refer to reconciliation of work and family life, or family-friendly arrangements. As stated above, a malleable idea has higher likelihood of gaining support and the programmatic family policy ideas disseminated by IOs definitely fit this picture: parental leave schemes of the Scandinavian type, combined with childcare coverage at the level of demand, appear to contribute to better competitiveness, sustainable welfare states, less child poverty, and more gender equality. Still it would be wrong to claim that IOs exclusively focus on economic issues. Especially, the OECD *ECEC* study focuses on the well-being of children and questions like the

quality of childcare institutions. Also, the positive attitude towards Scandinavian parental leave schemes and the advice on increased public spending on childcare are more welfare state friendly than, for instance, what the OECD is often associated with (Deacon 2007). How different national and international justifications for family policies really are is a question I find important and return to in section 9.3.

One question remaining after having outlined the development of family policy advice within IOs is "how international is international advice really?" Two issues are important here. First, the consensual approach of IOs means that the countries under review have a strong influence on which recommendations are given, as well as how they are formulated. Earlier research has discussed this aspect to some degree (e.g. Marcussen 2002, Zeitlin 2005a, Schäfer 2006, Armingeon 2007). Second, and this applies mainly to the OECD and is particularly important for family policy studies which are not part of regular and compulsory studies like OECD *Economic surveys*, whether a country is reviewed or not to a large extent depends on whether this country wants to be reviewed. This also applies to at least some EU peer reviews. This second finding has hardly been discussed in existing literature on IOs. Both points illustrate the possibility for strategic use of international advice, and mean that researchers must be cautious when interpreting possible evidence of foreign influence on national politics.

Third, to what extent are national reforms and debates influenced by international advice?

The present thesis has offered an extensive analysis of the impact of IOs on national family policy. Ideas from abroad have played an important role in Germany. Facing problems of an ageing population, low employment rates among women, and child poverty, foreign solutions became interesting even to political parties originally reluctant to interfere in family relations. This could probably best be described as a combination of different factors; problem pressure, ideas, and interests. International organizations have promoted reconciliation policies in this period. However, they seem to have been part of a unanimous research community; individual Member

States, institutions and researchers at the national level have all promoted similar policies. Thus, it is difficult to say that IOs were more important than other actors, but they definitely contributed to the consensus that abolished any doubt about what to do. And in some respects the IOs seem to have played an important role; their rankings and comparisons have triggered policy learning and the view that actions must be taken.

The perception that Germany must reform to catch up with other countries relies on comparisons with other welfare states. It is not always clear who has provided these comparisons, as policy actors often simply refer to "comparisons" or "comparative studies", and both national and international studies include such comparisons. However, my interviews clearly show that the work of IOs plays a role, as national actors are familiar with, for instance, the Barcelona targets on childcare.[209] Although references to the EU and OECD are few, the arguments policy-makers rely on are similar to those used by the IOs. The Elterngeld reform is, for example, described as bringing about several general economic benefits.

The chapter on Norway suggests that the Norwegian politics on the family is mainly a national debate. This could be because Norwegian family policy is considered well developed and efficient in regard to fertility and gender issues, and neither the EU nor the OECD have had much influence on Norwegian family policy. Interviewees mention the Council of Europe and Nordic Council as more important, but not as crucial.[210]

Both for Norway and Germany bilateral learning has been more important than IOs in the change of national family policy. However, it is very likely that the bilateral learning is strengthened through international forums and studies. What then about Norwegian influence on German reforms? As shown in chapter 7, German sources confirm that they are familiar with Norwegian experiences and policies, but Sweden seems to be the main provider of cross-border ideas. However, the fact-finding

[209] My interview with a SPD MP illustrates this. Before answering my question on whether she knew the aims set by IOs within childcare, she rose from her chair, went to her desk, picked up a report, came back and showed me a figure on childcare coverage across the EU where countries were placed below or above the coverage level of the Barcelona targets. She then asked me whether this was the kind of work my question referred to.

[210] This is an interesting finding as such organizations usually are not credited much importance, but I have too little data to go into depth here. Although their influence was probably more important for the early development of Norwegian family policy, the role of these IOs merits further research.

missions to Norway and collaboration in other ways still suggest that it is imprecise to say that Norway is an unimportant exporter of family policy ideas due to Norway's non EU membership. My analysis has further uncovered how Norway is well aware of, uses and compares itself, with work by the EU, for instance through the regular report *The EU Lisbon Strategy – A Norwegian Perspective*.

One family policy programme, the cash-for-care benefit, illustrates how IOs have still not become strong authorities within family policy (or social policy for that matter). Despite the OECD´s clear advice and the EU´s reluctance to programmes keeping women out of work for a long time, both Norway and Germany introduce such benefits. Admittedly, the EU has identified the Finnish home care allowance as a best practice through the *Alliance for European Families*, but this is so new and little developed that it can hardly have been influential. German and Norwegian policy makers are aware of the critique and as such the introduction of cash-for-care might illustrate "learning without action".

Although I find little evidence of IO´s decisive impact on national family policy this does not mean that my theoretical perspective is not useful. There are many traces of ideational influence in the form of bilateral learning and the idea perspective provides insights into when foreign advice matters. Thus, despite the absence of support for comprehensive IO influence, the analysis clearly indicates that these organizations and policy ideas play a role. Family policy ideas spread by IOs gain additional authority. What I argue is that international organizations are important, regarding information flows and transmission of ideas, but of course not that they *decide* what countries can do.[211] Table 9.1 summarizes the assumptions that have guided my analysis.

A few words on other explanations are needed since "international ideas" are not sufficient to understand the reforms. First of all this study did not intend to give a full answer to why reforms happened in Germany and Norway, but rather what role ideas promoted by IOs played in this process. Without expecting to uncover causal mechanisms between international advice and national policy I set out to describe in

[211] This finding could be different from different policy fields. Cf. Ervik, Kildal and Nilssen (forthcoming 2009) for a study of different social policy fields, showing that the degree of influence may vary.

Table 9.1: Summary of assumptions

Assumption	Result of analysis	Status (same, new or refined assumption)
For Germany and Norway:		
The power of ideas is strengthened if accepted by and further disseminated by influential international organizations	Confirmation and refinement	Especially rankings and comparisons receive attention, but national politics still more important
For Germany:		
Since the EU has no family policy in the sense of a coherent set of objectives for government activity in this policy area, but rather several policies that affect the situation of families, the influence on Germany is probably not very evident. This holds also for the OECD even though its family policy statements are more coherent	Confirmation	Some references to "international comparisons", but scarce evidence of EU or OECD impact National and international policy makers rely on similar arguments
Since the German parental leave and childcare reforms are presented as extension more than retrenchment of the welfare state, the German government will most likely claim credit for this reform more than make other bodies responsible for the changes.	Confirmation and refinement	Some references to "international comparisons", but scarce evidence of EU or OECD impact Extensive references to Sweden
One reason for the introduction of *Elterngeld* and increase in childcare facilities, which is not what one would expect from a Christian Democratic led coalition government, could be the idea disseminated by international organizations that such arrangements will have general economic advantages	Confirmation and refinement	General economic advantages were important Malleable ideas have greater chances of acceptation than other ideas
For Norway:		
Norway is more of an exporter than an importer since there has been less need for import of policies to Norway during the last two decades due to an acknowledged position as a forerunner country	Partly confirmation and refinement	Scarce evidence of EU or OECD impact, but other IOs have been important (Nordic cooperation, Council of Europe) Awareness of and comparison with EU and OECD policies
Norway is not a central "teacher" to other countries since it is not a member of the EU and thus decoupled from an important arena for mutual learning	Rejection	Non-membership is not a hindrance to export of policy ideas. Such export is deliberately used to gain general influence and acknowledgement

This table has been inspired by Nedergaard (2007) who develops a similar table to sum up his findings on policy learning in EU OMC committees.

depth family policy ideas as a possible source of attitude change on the need of reforms. As such, it is not surprising, nor a crucial objection to the approach of the study, that reforms happen for a number of reasons and international advice is only

one, and not the most important reason. What other reasons can be identified? Without once more opening up the discussion about ideas, interests, actors and institutions, it must be stressed how both socio-economic and political factors shed light on German and Norwegian family policy-making. I still contend that public budgets or socio-economic constraints cannot explain why reforms have been carried out, since the reforms represent cost increases rather than cost containment. However, the analysis has shown that economic issues have been important. The reforms are, in accordance with the idea of social policy as a productive factor, considered to bring about economic and other benefits in the long term. Higher birth rates, reduced child poverty, and higher female labour market participation rates in particular strengthen the sustainability of the welfare state. Interests matter; as I have shown for both the Norwegian and the German reforms, governments have of course considered which electoral consequences their reforms might have. These are among other things, connected to societal change in views on sex roles, female employment and responsibility for the upbringing of children. In Germany, a government change probably contributed a lot in making former opponents of the *Elterngeld*-reform part of the governmental coalition, implying that institutional and partisan veto players has also had some importance. This indicates that parties matter, but not in the way postulated by "parties matter" theory: the former government led by the Social Democrats was unable to carry this reform through. Having the CDU/CSU as part of the government made it possible to gain sufficient support for this reform. This might be understood by reference to Ross (1997, 2000a-b), who argues that a perceived guarantor of a certain (family) policy is able to carry out reforms other parties cannot. All of these factors, combined with the recommendations spread by a more or less unanimous expert community, IOs like the EU and OECD included, made Nordic family policy seem the obvious solution in Germany. This both underlines how causes are seldom unicausal but rather multicausal in the social sciences, and it stresses how it makes little sense to think of ideas in vacuum, and neglect problem pressure, interests, and actors. Current research is now looking into issues like the importance of educational paradigms, and cultural traditions and values, to understand childcare reforms (Jensen 2008b, Pfau-Effinger 2008), as well as more actor centred approaches

(Krüger 2007). These perspectives will, similarly, not be able to explain family policy reforms alone. As my study has made clear, however, studies of such individual explanatory variables shed light on why and how reforms are carried out. Theoretical perspectives complement each other and current research is proposing a synthesis of ideas, interests and institutions in a sort of multi-theoretical account to overcome the problems one approach cannot explain alone (e.g. Hudson, Hwang and Kühner 2008).

9.2 A note on methodology

To what extent is my methodological approach capable of answering the research questions, and does this approach involve an improvement compared with earlier studies? I have developed a methodological approach based on existing studies of the possible impact of international organizations and ideas. I have compared international advice with actual national reforms (concordance method) and have searched for traces of influence in a number of sources (process tracing). The benefit of this approach is not so much that it is new, several studies have used similar approaches (e.g. Armingeon and Beyeler 2004), but rather that I have collected more data sources, which can inform the research questions. Instead of relying on policy documents alone, I have extended the data material to include parliamentary debates and interviews with key actors as two important new sources.

How helpful this method is for answering my research questions is debatable. The comprehensive discussion of methodological challenges in chapter 4 suggests that it is impossible to deliver final answers. However, I argue that my approach, combined with sensitivity to issues like blame avoidance, credit claiming or up-loading, to mention just a few challenges to the interpretation of written and oral statements, improves the reliability of my study. From my analysis it is clear that the study of ideas and IOs benefits from relying on interviews and parliamentary debates in addition to policy documents, something earlier studies of IOs have done sparingly. Still, a critical view on the research design and some reflections on my approach are appropriate. These reflections concern data sources, particularly interviews.

The obvious question of getting to talk to the "right" people should be addressed. Throughout the analysis I have anonymized my informants. To mention actors I have tried to interview, but been rejected by or not received an answer from at all, is thus not an option, because it would function almost like making a list of who I actually have talked to. However, one obvious critique against the conduct of interviews is that it is somewhat incidental who you get to talk with and what information is revealed. One example may illustrate this. The fact that there had been extensive contact and several delegations visiting Norway in the years before the recent German family policy reforms was not emphasized by my German interviewees, and was partly unknown to me before I conducted my Norwegian interviews. This may be interpreted in different ways. A first and practical point is that turnover in a ministry may influence the answers you get. Moreover, obviously, Norwegian actors may have an interest in presenting themselves as important suppliers of terms for European reforms while German actors may have a similar incentive not to refer too much to foreign influence. Furthermore, if the Norwegian influence was not as important as for instance the Swedish, then it would make sense not to speak all that much about the contact between German and Norwegian authorities, even if it has been comprehensive. Still, it must be admitted that not having heard about these contact points from the German side, not only suggests that the Norwegian influence has been limited. It is also a reminder that one should not rely too much on information conveyed in a small number of expert interviews. This is why interviews could only be one of the sources on which to base this study. To conduct interviews with more actors involved in the development of international advice, and the corresponding national actors receiving the advice, could have enriched my thesis.

9.3 Unresolved questions and future research

In bringing together the findings from the four empirical chapters, some new questions arise. First, the analysis of the cross border influence, and the instrumental characteristics, of family policy ideas, poses the question of whether national and international actors have a completely different way of understanding and arguing for

the need for reform. One could start by asking whether international and national arguments differ, or have they been similar all the time? If the argumentation is converging, a second question is why? Is it because IOs become more social policy oriented or because national actors become more focussed on economic issues?

The justification of national family policy and international advice could have been compared in more detail, to question what I consider to be a mistake in some literature on global social policy, namely, that international advice is so much more instrumental and economically justified than at the national level. If this is not said explicitly, then the international level is at least criticized for having an instrumental approach, implicitly saying that this is negative for the Member States if they incorporate such an approach. Lister, for instance, states that the new welfare policy paradigm of investing in children rather than promoting good childhood is strongly advocated by the OECD and EU Commission (2008: 384), while especially the Nordic countries balance ideas of investment and good childhood better (2008: 393). Lister (2006, 2008) argues that in a "social investment strategy" social policy is given an instrumental role, where life quality and the securing of children's rights are subordinate to the focus on children as future workers. She does not restrict this attitude to international organizations and is worried about how "… children are now at the heart of social policy as the objects of both investment and regulatory policies. (…) children appear to matter more for their potential and future productivity as citizen-workers than as children in the here and now" (2006: 62).[212] Some of the scholars arguing that the EU and OECD do not have family policies, say that all these two organizations have are employment policies with a touch of family-friendly policies that contribute to the employment policies (Mahon 2002, Stratigaki 2004, Lewis 2006b, Lewis et al. 2008). According to Lewis et al.: "Work/family policy at EU level and in Member States are thus increasingly regarded as employment rather than family policy issues, which is in turn part of the broader shift to employment-led social policy" (2008: 262). I only partly agree. I consider EU and OECD family policy advice to be employment oriented, directed towards a number of social and economic

[212] See also Schulz-Nieswandt and Maier-Rigaud (2007: 416-418) or Grødem (2008) for a critique of this approach.

societal goals and with a strong emphasis on incentives to work. However, I argue that that there exists quite a lot of advice from international organizations on family policy and not everything is instrumental and neo-liberal. Moreover, I do not consider an instrumental view of family policy to be exclusive to international actors. It may very well be that it is precisely these expected economic advantages of a domestic family policy that have made international actors engage in what is for them a rather new area, but I do not consider domestic actors to focus less on such instrumental issues, either historically or contemporarily.

Historically, Lundqvist (2007) has shown how Swedish policy makers argued in a very instrumental way early in the 20th century. Going back to this period when the Nordic welfare states started to develop their family policy, which later has become famous as path-breaking with regard to birth rates and gender equality, much of the motivation can be found in economic challenges and sustainability issues. For instance, Alva and Gunnar Myrdal's famous book from 1935, which inspired the Swedish approach, was entitled *Crisis in the Population Question* (*Kris i Befolkningsfrågan*). As Hantrais and Letablier argue (1996: 149), "The origins of family policy in the 1930s in Sweden were also associated with concerns about demographic issues". Family and population policy figured high on the agenda in many European countries during this period.

And contemporary policy is also discussed to a high degree with reference to the same goals, and is justified instrumentally. As became clear from chapter 8 on Norway's role in the "idea game", the Norwegian political left and the OECD, arguably stemming from two very different ideological traditions, rely on more or less the same arguments when criticizing the cash-for-care allowance. The scheme is, for example, considered bad for female employment.

I do not disagree with the claim that when recommending reconciliation policies the EU and OECD in reality are encouraging both parents to work, knowing that this will have benefits for the overall economy and sustainability of the welfare state. What I say is that individual countries also argue along the same lines. It is thus not an adequate description to say that the EU and OECD, in contrast to its Member States, are promoting reconciliation of work and family life from a neo-liberal agenda.

For instance, the EU is not that different from individual countries when proposing short parental leave schemes and increased childcare coverage. In a discussion of the EU Lisbon strategy, Annesley (2007) takes issue with how this agenda is accused of being neo-liberal. She finds, first, that central aspects of the policies, now promoted by the EU, originated in its Member States, the EES being for instance quite Nordic, and second, that there is no difference between how the EU and individual Member States justify policies. She concludes that the model is social democratic rather than neo-liberal.

I thus interpret the family policy advice of international actors differently from some of the other scholars referred to. I consider the "family-friendly" policy recommendations of the EU and OECD to be quite similar to those of their Member States, both in actual design and underlying reasoning. Who influenced who is more dificult to decide. To present these international actors as means-end focussed, while national actors are more willing to think of the well-being of citizens, is in my opinion not accurate. However, my interpretation is not necessarily one in which international organizations are regarded very positively; it is more an interpretation which questions the view that Member States are more generous or "kind" when offering family policy arrangements such as parental leave or kindergartens. For instance, the parental leave schemes of Nordic countries, which are now increasingly being recommended by the EU and OECD, link the level of payment one receives while on leave to former employment record. Paid leave is conditioned upon a former employment record, implying that inactive residents will get substantially lower benefits than people who have been, or are, employed. Actually, one of the main reasons why the EU and OECD commend Nordic policies is exactly their apparent ability to bring about higher employment rates and fertility rates.

Kildal (forthcoming 2009) argues that the national and international goals of welfare policy might be converging, departing from former normative justifications of social policy, such as solidarity or social justice. I welcome studies comparing the justification of family policy at the national and international level. I suspect that such an undertaking would reveal that the claim that, while countries have real family policy, international actors have no such thing, but only instrumental employment-

oriented social policies with certain impacts on family policy, is at best incomplete. International actors have been very late to put family policy on the agenda, but now they have at least some kind of family policy advice and much of this is adapted from their Member States.

An interesting question is why the instrumental approach and economic language is so dominant among national and international actors promoting family policy reforms. My interview data sheds some light on this. Several German interviewees underline how the use of an economic language, e.g. the business case for family-friendly policies, is deliberate tin order to reach the private sector and convince them to cooperate (German interviews 1, 4, 6). The economization of the debate is thus part of presenting family-friendly policies as a productive factor and a malleable idea; by introducing family-friendly policies one addresses a number of challenges at the same time. Barbier (2005: 437) notes that those who want the EU to engage more in social policy must make use of an economic language to be convincing. Lister notes how an instrumental approach to children's policy could be useful at the level of the EU, where social policy is subordinated to employment economic goals (2008: 402). It is probably crucial to use this economic language in order to receive sufficient attention, both at the national and international level. This is expressed directly by former family minister Renate Schmidt in a speech some years ago:

> "I have spoken about family policy in a distant manner and from an economic perspective. I do that because I want to liberate family policy from the dubious reputation of a soft, female topic. I do that because companies in difficult times are best convinced by hard economic facts. Family policy is the central topic, an important educational and economical topic, in one word: Family policy is politics for the future" (2004a: 5, my translation).

Bøås and McNeil (2004) ask what makes an idea attractive for international organizations. In my case, the anticipated economic benefits associated with Nordic family policy have probably been crucial, underlining how ideas, interests, and context work together. The process whereby Nordic family policy characteristics became adopted and later disseminated as best practice by the EU and OECD should be studied further. And, if my analysis is correct, one should be careful in criticizing

international actors for having an instrumental approach to and economic perspective of family policy. Instead, if one finds such an approach unfortunate, one should criticize its Member States. Ostner and Schmitt (2008) and Gupta et al. (2006) offer discussions of whether Nordic family policy is a model other countries should import. They point at how women still are still the main carers in these countries, something the rather low take-up rates for men's parental leave, the highly gendered labour market, and the considerable gender pay gap, illustrate.[213] Reconciliation policies may, according to Hantrais, dilute the family dimension of policy by focussing too much on work issues (2004a: 169). I find it just as interesting to discuss such questions as whether IOs are presenting neo-liberal ideas or not.

Furthermore, and continuing the critical undertaking, I question what is a central premise in both the publications of international actors like the EU and OECD, but also for national governments reforming their family policies; is public policy really the crucial factor which will change citizens' attitudes and behaviour towards the aims of policy makers? Although some of the OECD reports mention the uncertainty connected with the effect of public policies on, for instance, fertility rates (e.g. OECD 2003a: 26, Sleebos 2003), the reports rely on a fairly strong belief in how public intervention and provision of benefits and services will result in the wanted policy objectives. As one example, the OECD emphasizes again and again how financial incentives are crucial in making parents act "the right way" or avoid "the wrong one". Without engaging in a long discussion, I will mention that it is rather easy to find examples of how countries without generous state support have experienced high birth rates (Ireland, USA, Turkey), while inhabitants enjoying a more family-friendly governmental policy have not always responded in the same way. In Sweden, fertility rates have increased and decreased in concordance with the economic situation and labour market prospects. Similarly, inhabitants in the eastern part of Germany, which was the German Democratic Republic until 1990, enjoy substantially higher childcare coverage than their fellow countrymen in other parts, but still do not have higher birth rates. And female labour market participation in Norway has been high for

[213] In Norway, an Equal Pay Commission (Likelønnskommisjonen) recently issued its report on how to narrow the wage gap between men and women. A restructuring of central family policies like parental leave was one topic in this report. Cf. the webpage http://www.likelonn.no/in-english.72942.no.html

decades and long before the supportive family policies were introduced (Ellingsæter 2003: 423).

The reasons why people in these countries have acted like they have are numerous, as, for instance, both cultural attitudes and the general economic situation matter a great deal. Research in this area is still uncertain and does not allow for definitive conclusions (e.g. Hantrais and Letablier 1996, Strohmeier 2002, Hantrais 2004a, Lappegård 2007, Rønsen and Skrede 2007, Knijn and Ostner 2008).[214] These considerations could, in my opinion, have been given more space in OECD and EU reports.[215]

A few words on the possible convergence between Norwegian and German family policy are in order. As discussed in chapter 7, there can be no doubt that the German parental leave and childcare reforms are heavily inspired by Scandinavian arrangements. And the planned introduction of a cash-for-care benefit is similar to the Norwegian *kontantstøtte.* While Germany has a substantially lower parental leave benefit (67 vs 80 or 100 percent income replacement) and childcare coverage for children aged less than three, compared with Norway, Germany has taken the front seat in other ways. The father's quota is longer than the Norwegian counterpart and perhaps more important; Germany has introduced an individual right to leave, whereas Norwegian men still rely on the employment record of their spouses. If Germany has learned from Norway and other Scandinavian countries, these last characteristics of German family policy could be imported by Norway.[216]

A topic for future research is the role of experts in welfare state reform. This is not a new topic; in Germany it has, for instance, been addressed by Lutz (1998) for the period until Unification, and Knijn and Smit (2007) and Lister (2008) have briefly looked at this in an EU perspective. However, within the family policy sphere this

[214] Whether family policy has an impact on demographic trends, family formation, living standard, living arrangements, the family – employment relationship etc has been studied by several scholars. See Hantrais (2004) for more references and useful overviews.

[215] One obvious question regarding the reforms I have studied then is "did they work?" The question is particularly interesting for the recent German reforms since the effect of the Norwegian cash-for-care has been studied already (see chapter 8, section 8.2) and the extension of childcare is about increasing already high coverage rates. However, this is beyond the scope of my analysis and I refer the reader to the Federal Statistical Office (Destatis 2008), Henninger et al. (2008), Kluve, Schmidt, Tamm and Winter (2008) or Klose (forthcoming 2008) for more information.

[216] As the Norwegian government coalition presented its state budget for 2009, a plan to increase the father's quota by four weeks from July 2009, reaching a total of ten weeks, was stated.

could be interesting to scrutinize further. An influential scholar like Esping-Andersen has played an important role at the international level. The 2001 Belgian EU presidency asked him, together with colleagues to write a report on welfare arrangements in Europe. The report *A new Welfare Architecture for Europe* is definitely a possible source of influence on EU and national family policy. Esping-Andersen et al. incorporated much of this report in the book *Why we need a New Welfare State* (2002), where the family is given a central role. Esping-Andersen has also served as an expert for individual European countries like Spain. In Germany, a scholar like Bertram has played an important role through his participation in governmental commissions and the writing of commissioned reports, like *the Seventh Family Report* and one on sustainable family policy (Bertram et al. 2006). Interestingly, Bertram has also worked for international bodies. In 2006 he wrote a report on children's well-being and poverty in Germany for the UNICEF. Peter Moss is a third example of a scholar who has been active at the international level, e.g. within the EU childcare network in the 1990s, and in the OECD in the last years as part of the ECEC study and review teams.

The way scholars like Esping-Andersen, Bertram and Moss are part both of a national and international epistemic community, to use Haas´ (1992) term, probably gives them great influence in the development and diffusion of national and international family policy ideas. I think this warrants a study, perhaps in combination with the role of welfare commissions. Many European countries have witnessed the establishment of such commissions in the preparation of welfare reforms. Governments have appointed them to evaluate welfare schemes and lay the basis for reforms. Some of these commissions have dealt specifically with the challenges of an ageing society (e.g. the Norwegian and the UK Pensions Commissions), while others have been given a broader mandate (e.g. the German or the Danish Welfare Commissions). The rationale for the establishment of such expert commissions can be a combination of needs for expertise, legitimacy of subsequent governmental reforms, and the depolitization of public debate. The role of such commissions has received some attention in welfare research (e.g. Kropp 2003, Borchorst and Goul Andersen 2006, Ervik 2006, Immergut, Anderson and Schulze 2007), but hardly from a family

policy perspective. Welfare commissions have been one important supplier of terms, and to shed light on their, and individual experts like Esping-Andersen's, function in the reform processes of different countries would be a significant contribution to the field of family policy reforms. My work could thus be taken a step further by a study of the role of such internationally oriented experts. Such a study could also add to our understanding of whether an international family policy is emerging, e.g. within the EU and OECD.

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Portuguese EU Presidency (2007): Demographic change, family policies and social cohesion: Reconciling professional, personal and family life. New challenges for social partners and public policies, 12 and 13 July, Lisbon. Website:
http://www.mtss.gov.pt/eu2007pt/en/left.asp?01.02.03.07

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Overview of EU legislation on pregnant workers and parental leave: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/gender_equality/legislation/pregnant_en.html

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The European Observatory on the Social Situation, Demography and Family: http://pm2.activenavigation.com/facade/europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/eoss/index_en.html

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First Forum on Europe's Demographic Future (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/events/event_en.cfm?id=625)

OECD ECEC homepage: http://www.oecd.org/document/63/0,3343,en_33873108_39418658_1941759_1_1_1_1,00.html

OECD webpage on family policy: http://www.oecd.org/department/0,2688,en_2649_34819_1_1_1_1_1,00.html

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Norden: Official co-operation in the Nordic region: http://www.norden.org

The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation (NAV): www.nav.no

Appendix

Appendix 1: Description of the project Policy Discourses, International Actors and National Welfare Policy. Norway in a Comparative Perspective.

The following presentation is taken from the webpage of the Rokkan Centre (http://www.rokkan.uib.no/projects/?/$present&id=198, accessed 22.10.2008):

Policy Discourses, International Actors and National Welfare Policy. Norway in a Comparative Perspective.
2005 - 2008 / Prosjektnummer 800306

This project asks how welfare policies are shaped by the interaction of international and national actors. It explores what consequences the discourses of international organisations (the discourses on `rights and duties´, `targeting´, `active aging´ and `the sustainability of the welfare state´) have on national welfare systems. Selecting discourses that encompass the interrelationship between welfare and work as a common denominator, and providing a comparative framework of analysis will increase our knowledge about the connection between the economy and the means of welfare policy.

The project will shed light on this topic by applying a combination of two different approaches: Firstly, a macro- perspective that scrutinizes how overarching processes such as globalization and Europeanization (of discourses) frame policy-making in four countries, with primary emphasis on Germany and Norway, and including to a varying degree Denmark and the UK as secondary comparative cases. Secondly, an institutional perspective stressing the significance of national constellations of historically established work, welfare, and social partnership institutions in shaping the potential for welfare policy stability and reform.

Project employer

- The Research Council of Norway

Project leader

- Nanna Kildal (Senior Researcher, Mag. Art.)

People working on the project

- Rune Ervik (Senior Researcher, Dr. Polit.)
- Aksel Hatland (Senior Researcher in supplementary position, Dr.philos.)
- Stein Kuhnle (Professor, Cand. Polit.)
- Tord Skogedal Lindén (PhD Candidate, Master)
- Even Nilssen (Senior Researcher, Dr.polit.)

Appendix 2: Interview request

I used similar versions of the letter template translated into German and Norwegian when contacting informants in the two countries.

Interview request regarding research project on Policy Discourses, International Actors and National Welfare Policy

Dear Mr/Ms. XXX

In connection with an ongoing project titled 'Policy discourses, international actors and national welfare policy' we are planning to conduct a series of interviews with central experts and policy actors within the welfare policy area at international (European Union and OECD) and national levels. Therefore we now contact you to ask if you would agree to participate in an interview on this occasion. Your help would be highly appreciated.

Our research project is conducted at the Stein Rokkan Centre for Social Studies, University of Bergen and is financed by the Norwegian Research Council within the research program on Welfare.

In our project we ask how domestic welfare policies are shaped by the interaction of international and national actors. It explores what consequences the discourses of international organisations within the areas of social inclusion, labour market, pensions and family policy, have on national welfare systems. Selecting discourses that encompass the interrelationship between welfare and work as a common denominator, and providing a comparative framework of analysis, a main aim is to increase our knowledge about the connection between the economy and the means of welfare policy.

The interview will last a maximum of 1-1.5 hours. During this time we will ask a series of questions about economic and social policy ideas, policy processes and possible policy outcomes. With your permission, the interview will be recorded. However you can be assured that the information will be treated confidentially. You may also withdraw from the interview at any point.

The interviews will preferably be conducted during week 6 and 7 in 2007 (06.02.2007-19.02.2007). If you agree to be interviewed please indicate a date and time suitable for you within this time schedule. If this period is not possible please suggest a more suitable date and time for you.

For your information, we provide the link to our research project below:
http://www.rokkansenteret.uib.no/projects/?/$present&id=198

Yours sincerely,

XX

Appendix 3: Interview guide and informants

I conducted the interviews in English and German without relying on intermediaries. The interview guide below from an interview with an OECD official serves as one example of which questions I posed. The interview guides were adjusted to each interview. Interviews and transcription were conducted in Norwegian, English and German. Selected transcripts, used in the analysis in the form of quotes, were later translated into English. I thus avoid filtered and selective access (Hantrais 2003b: 9). However, questions were developed within the larger research group and/or with the help of native speakers in order to make sure that questions were asked in a proper way. We focussed on ensuring clarity and avoiding leading questions (Kvale 1996: 12). And particularly for the German interviews (interview transcripts) I asked a native speaker to check my translations. This goes also for quotations from other German sources (parliamentary debates, policy documents and newspapers).

An important challenge when conducting interviews is the issue of anonymity and the reader's possibility to check information based on such interviews. Many textbooks on methodology stress how the researcher must maintain the confidentiality and privacy of interviewees (e.g. Widerberg 2001, Ryen 2002, Mason 2002, Grønmo 2004). Several studies underline how they ensure confidentiality and anonymity by referring to interview codes instead of real names (e.g. Büchs and Friedrich 2005, Falkner et al. 2005), but few discusses that this could also be problematic (exceptions provided for instance by Smith 1990, Mishler 1991, Kvale 1996, Kvale and Brinkmann 2008, Kvale 2008). However, there is a potential conflict between norms of scientific research and the wish to protect confidentiality (Kvale 1996: 115, Kvale and Brinkmann 2008: 72). Hiding the identity of your interviewee makes intersubjective control and reproducing of findings impossible.[217] Smith (1990: 262) asks how other scholars can check research "if no one knows exactly who is who, and where and when the events took place" (1996: 115). I consider this to be an important objection that is under researched in existing literature on interviewing. Can you trust people who only want to talk "off the record"? To what extent are interviewees representative of a field of study? The trustworthiness of a study would increase if all informants were referred to by full name and position. The problem is, of course, that it is more difficult to get people to participate if they are not guaranteed anonymity.[218]

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[217] Within journalism the use of anonymous sources is debated regularly and this reflects the same dilemmas.
[218] Mishler discusses other aspects of confidentiality. He does not recommend a general identification of informants, but draws attention towards ethical dilemmas, for instance that confidentiality is not always in the interests of interviewees who are then partly "deprived of their voice" (1991: 125).

Although some of my interviewees have allowed me to refer directly to them, I rely on interview codes in my presentation. The only exception is a former minister of family affairs, Renate Schmidt, who I name since such top politicians are used to give interviews and usually have no problems with being identified. I think that my solution is somewhat unfortunate, not the least since I have talked to several high level bureaucrats, politicians and researchers whose names most likely would increase the readers trust in my analysis. However, it would be even more unfortunate not to get to speak to these informants.

Interviewguide OECD representative

Presentation of project, permission to tape the interview, questions of confidentiality etc.

Thank you very much for agreeing to help us with our research conducted at the Stein Rokkan Centre for Social Studies, University of Bergen. Our project is financed by the Norwegian Research Council within the research program on Welfare. In our project we ask how welfare policies are shaped by the interaction of international and national actors. It explores what consequences the discourses of international organisations, within the areas of social inclusion, labour market, pensions and family policy, have on national welfare systems. Selecting discourses that encompass the interrelationship between welfare and work as a common denominator, and providing a comparative framework of analysis the aim is to increase our knowledge about the connection between the economy and the means of welfare policy.

Warm up

1. What are your responsibilities in the OECD?

2. How did you get this position?
Academic/professional, career path

Family policy in the OECD

3. What does the OECD do in the field of family policy?

4. Since when and why does the OECD take an interest in this policy field? Which actors want more family policy? When did these issues emerge on the policy agenda?

5. How is family policy recommendations developed in the OECD and who are the actors in this process?
- Do individual countries try to influence the direction etc? OMC-similar processes or?
- Are there any conflicts between policy actors pushing forwards proposals and competing policy views?

6. Do individual countries deliver input in this process? Does Norway? Germany? What kind of national experts do you work with; bureaucrats or politicians? (Epistemic communities)

7. Do the economically-oriented players or the socially-oriented players dominate the debate about family policy arrangements?

Regarding the *Babies and Bosses* series:

8. Who choose which countries are studied?

9. Does the OECD give advice to countries not scrutinized in the reports? Are the identified problems and solutions offered thought to apply also to other member states than those treated directly by reports?

10. Which status do reports like *Babies and Bosses* have in comparison with Economic Surveys, Economic Outlooks and so on? Are they read, considered and answered by national governments? Are they influential and authoritative?

11. How would you assess the impact/influence of OECD in the field of family policy?
- ideational arbitrator (disseminate policies) or artist (develop policies)?

12. Is family policy used/included in other OECD-publications such as Economic Surveys or Economic Outlooks and used by other departments and directorates?

Reading the Economic Survey of Norway of 2005 and February 2007 I can find no references to family policies at all and in the Survey on Germany in 2006 there are only a few comments on family issues regarding labour supply. Does this mean that family policy is not considered important enough by the OECD to be discussed and evaluated in Economic Surveys?

Cooperation with other countries and organisations:

13. Do the OECD and EU cooperate within family policies? How?

14. How do you consider the role of the EU in family policy compared with the OECD?

15. Two views seem very prominent on the agenda nowadays;
    d) Reconciliation of work and family life;
    e) Family policy as a productive factor (fertility, human capital, securing welfare)

Would you say that this discourse originates with national governments or do they come from the international level or from somewhere else?

16. Can you tell us about future initiatives planned by the OECD in the field of family policy?

17. Are there any comments you would like to add or are there any specific issues you would like to elaborate?

18. Do you accept that we make references to this interview in future publications?

Appendix 4 Closer on parliamentary debates in Germany and Norway and list of debate material analyzed

Germany

In Germany, new laws must pass three readings before they are accepted. For both the Elterngeld and TAG-reform I therefore analyze the minutes of plenary proceedings (Plenarprotokoll) of these three readings. It is common for the opposition to propose amendments to or changes of the original bill in the form of an application (German: Antrag) and I include such documents when they are discussed together with the bill in parliament. In addition, I analyze the actual reform proposals (Gesetzentwurf) which in Germany have explanatory statements. These explanations of draft laws have some of the same functions as white and green papers (Büchs 2006: 66).

In practice, I have used the search engine of the Bundestag (DIP; Documentation and Information System for Parliamentary Materials) to identify the minutes of plenary proceedings of the three readings by searching for "Elterngeld" and "Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz". The front pages of these documents have a table of contents listing the topics and documents discussed in the debates as well as the MPs participating. I have then printed and analyzed these debates and the other documents listed in the table of contents.

This approach has one obvious limitation: As I rely on documents discussed during the Bundestag´s three readings of the bill, I do not gain access to the proceedings of the Federal Council (Bundesrat). Being a federal state, the Federal Council, which is representing the interests of the states, must approve new laws which affect the states. Both the reforms in question were discussed in this chamber and I thus should include debates from the Bundesrat as well. This is done by simply entering the terms "Elterngeld" and "Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz" in the search engine and then print and analyze the corresponding debate to the readings in the Bundestag. Due to a technical problem with the DIP, the information service department of the Bundestag sent me the Bundesrat minutes of plenary proceedings for the TAG-reform.

This sample means that not all documents connected with the reforms are analyzed. For instance, the opposition might have sent questions and comments to the government based on what they know about the bill under preparation before the government makes their bill public. Also, there may be discussions after the bill is approved, e.g. if smaller changes to the new law is made. However, by including the minutes of plenary proceedings of both

houses, questions and amendments proposed by the opposition discussed during the readings as well as the draft law itself and the main debates in the Bundesrat I have a comprehensive material suitable for my search for traces of foreign influence on the reforms.

While the Elterngeld and TAG-reform constitute the main reforms to be studied, I also include one later reform; the further extension of childcare and the introduction of a cash-for-care benefit (Kifög; Kinderförderungsgesetz). Since this reform is of secondary interest and was approved by the Bundesrat as late as 7 November 2008, I pay less attention to it. Therefore I have not conducted a full search for documents and simply relied on a couple of documents that gives a hint at what is going on. This makes sense since the final treatment of the bill has not taken a place and a full search would be impossible. However, this also means that I must be extra careful when interpreting this material since it is not complete.

Regarding references to the material, I rely on English translations of the German parliamentary expressions (cf. glossary; the translations from Germany are based on the official translations provided by the home page of the Bundestag). Original German quotes translated into English in the main text are gathered in appendix 5.1. Page numbers are given to make it easier if the reader should wish to check a quote or read a larger excerpt.

List of debate material and documents referred to in the dissertation

Document for TAG (Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz):

Bundesrat (2004a): Plenarprotokoll 803. Stenografischer Bericht 803. Sitzung. Berlin, Freitag, den 24. September 2004.

Bundesrat (2004b): Plenarprotokoll 806. Stenografischer Bericht 806. Sitzung. Berlin, Freitag, den 26. November 2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004a): Drucksache 15/2580. Antrag der SPD und BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN, Ausbau von Förderungsangeboten für Kinder in vielfältigen Formen als zentraler Beitrag öffentlicher Mitverantwortung für die Bildung, Erziehung und Betreuung von Kindern, 03.03.2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004b): Drucksache 15/2651. Antrag der CDU/CSU, Ausbau und Förderung der Tagespflege als Form der Kinderbetreuung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 09.03.2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004c): Drucksache 15/2697. Antrag der FDP, Faire Chancen für jedes Kind - Für eine bessere Bildung, Erziehung und Betreuung von Anfang an, 11.03.2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004d): Drucksache 15/3035. Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Ausschusses für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Maria Eichhorn, Dr. Maria Böhmer, Antje Blumenthal, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der CDU/CSU: Frauen und Männer beim Wiedereinstieg in den Beruf fördern. 03.05.2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004e): Drucksache 15/3036. Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Ausschusses für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend – zu dem Antrag der Abgeordneten Caren Marks, Christel Humme, Sabine Bätzing, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD sowie der Abgeordneten Ekin Deligöz, Irmingard Schewe-Gerigk, Jutta Dümpe-Krüger, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion des BÜNDNISSES 90/DIE GRÜNEN: Ausbau von Förderungsangeboten für Kinder in vielfältigen Formen als zentraler Beitrag öffentlicher Mitverantwortung für die Bildung, Erziehung und Betreuung von Kindern, 03.05.2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004f): Drucksache 15/3488. Antrag der CDU/CSU, Elternhaus, Bildung und Betreuung verzahnen, 29.06.2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004g): Drucksache 15/3512. Antrag der FDP, Solides Finanzierungskonzept für den Ausbau von Kinderbetreuungsangeboten für unter Dreijährige, 01.07.2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004h): Drucksache 15/3676. Gesetzentwurf der Bundesregierung, Entwurf eines Gesetzes zum qualitätsorientierten und bedarfsgerechten Ausbau der Tagesbetreuung und zur Weiterentwicklung der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe (Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz – TAG). Berlin, 06.09.2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004i): Plenarprotokoll 15/123. Stenografischer Bericht
123. Sitzung. Berlin, Donnerstag, den 9. September 2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004j): Drucksache 15/1590. Antrag der FDP, Tagespflege als Baustein zum bedarfsgerechten Kinderbetreuungsangebot - Bessere Rahmenbedingungen für Tagesmütter und -väter, Eltern und Kinder, 24.09.2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004k): Drucksache 15/3986. Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung Entwurf eines Gesetzes zum qualitätsorientierten und bedarfsgerechten Ausbau der Tagesbetreuung und zurWeiterentwicklung der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe (Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz – TAG) – Drucksache 15/3676 – Stellungnahme des Bundesrates und Gegenäußerung der Bundesregierung, 20.10.2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004l): Drucksache 15/4045. Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht 1 Ausschuss für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 27.10.2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004m): Plenarprotokoll 15/135. Stenografischer Bericht
135. Sitzung. Berlin, Donnerstag, den 28. Oktober 2004.

Deutscher Bundestag (2004n): Drucksache 15/1983. Antrag der CDU/CSU, Frauen und Männer beim Wiedereinstieg in den Beruf fördern, 11.11.2004.

Documents for Elterngeld:

Bundesrat (2006): Plenarprotokoll 827. Stenografischer Bericht 827. Sitzung. Berlin, Freitag, den 3. November 2006.

Deutscher Bundestag (2006a): Drucksache 16/1168. Antrag der FDP, Flexible Konzepte für die Familie – Kinderbetreuung und frühkindliche Bildung zukunftsfähig machen, 05.04.2006.

Deutscher Bundestag (2006b): Drucksache 16/1673. Antrag der BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN, Kinder fördern und Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie stärken – Rechtsanspruch auf Kindertagesbetreuung ausweiten, 31.05.2006.

Deutscher Bundestag (2006c): Drucksache 16/1877. Antrag der LINKE, Elterngeld sozial gestalten, 20.06.2006.

Deutscher Bundestag (2006d): Drucksache 16/1889. Gesetzentwurf der Fraktionen der CDU/CSU und SPD, Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Einführung des Elterngeldes. Berlin, 20.6.2006.

Deutscher Bundestag (2006e): Plenarprotokoll 16/40. Stenografischer Bericht 40. Sitzung. Berlin, Freitag, den 22. Juni 2006.

Deutscher Bundestag (2006f): Drucksache 16/2785. Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht, 27.09.2006.

Deutscher Bundestag (2006g): Drucksache 16/2788. Bericht des Haushaltsausschusses (8. Ausschuss) gemäß § 96 der Geschäftsordnung, 27.09.2006.

Deutscher Bundestag (2006h): Plenarprotokoll 16/55. Stenografischer Bericht 55. Sitzung. Berlin, Freitag, den 29. September 2006.

Documents for Kifög (the new expansion of childcare and the introduction of a cash-for-care benefit):

Bundesrat (2008): Plenarprotokoll 845. Stenografischer Bericht 845. Sitzung. Berlin, Freitag, den 13. Juni 2008.

Deutscher Bundestag (2007): BT-Drucksache 16/6596. Gesetzentwurf der Fraktionen der CDU/CSU und SPD, Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Errichtung eines Sondervermögens „Kinderbetreuungsausbau“, 09.10.2007.

Deutscher Bundestag (2008a): BT-Drucksache 16/8406. Antrag der FDP, Faire Chancen für private und privat-gewerbliche Anbieter bei der Kinderbetreuung – ohne weiteres Zögern Entwurf des Kinderförderungsgesetzes vorlegen, 05.03.2008.

Deutscher Bundestag (2008b): BT-Drucksache 16/9049. Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung Bericht der Bundesregierung über den Stand des Ausbaus für ein

bedarfsgerechtes Angebot an Kindertagesbetreuung für Kinder unter drei Jahren für das Berichtsjahr 2007, 30.04.2008.

Deutscher Bundestag (2008c): BT-Drucksache 16/9299. Gesetzentwurf der Fraktionen der CDU/CSU und SPD, Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Förderung von Kindern unter drei Jahren in Tageseinrichtungen und in der Kindertagespflege (Kinderförderungsgesetz – KiföG), 27.05.2008.

Deutscher Bundestag (2008d): Plenarprotokoll 16/163. Stenografischer Bericht 163. Sitzung. Berlin, Donnerstag, den 29. Mai 2008.

Deutscher Bundestag (2008e): Plenarprotokoll 16/180. Stenografischer Bericht 180. Sitzung. Berlin, Freitag, den 26. September 2008.

Norway

For my German case, I have analyzed material in connection with the introduction of three laws in 2004, 2006 and 2008. For my Norwegian case, I analyze two family policy programmes in several phases (e.g. introduction/non-introduction, evaluations, extension/reduction). This is possible as the laws have existed for some time while the (approximately) corresponding German laws are rather new.

For both the *kontantstøtte* and *barnehage*-reforms I analyze the minutes of plenary proceedings (*Stortingstidende, St.tid*). Like in Germany, it is common for the opposition to propose amendments to or changes of the original bill in the form of an application (e.g *Dok 8-forslag*) and I include such documents when they are discussed in parliament. In addition, I analyze the actual reform proposals submitted to the parliament as *Odelstingsproposisjon* (proposition to the Odelsting; Ot.prp) and Stortingsproposisjoner (proposition to the Storting). I also study white papers (*Stortingsmeldinger*) and Recommendations to the Storting (*Innstillinger til Stortinget*). The term *Stortingsforhandlinger* (parliamentary records) contains all the documents referred to here.

In practice, I have used the search engine of the Storting (*Søk i publikasjoner fra storting og regjering*) to identify the documents by searching for "kontantstøtte" (cash-for-care benefit) and "barnehage" (childcare). The "list of hits" provides an overview of all parliamentary records (Stortingsforhandlinger) where these terms occur. I have then printed and analyzed the most relevant debates and the other documents listed in the table of contents.

Regarding references to the material, I rely on English translations of the Norwegian parliamentary expressions (cf. glossary; the translations from Norwegian are based on the official translations provided by the home page of the Storting and government). Original

Norwegian quotes translated into English in the main text are, as the German equivalents, gathered in an appendix (5.2). Page numbers are given to make it easier if the reader should wish to check a quote or read a larger excerpt.

It is important to note that the Storting changed its website and search engines substantially on the 29 October 2008. Since then, search options have been improved, making it easier to find the relevant texts and with more information in English. For instance, the whole process of deliberation on a parliamentary item through its various stages is now made more visible. However, this might confuse a reader trying to follow the steps of the approach described here.

List of debate and documents material referred to in the dissertation

Documents for kontantstøtte (cash-for-care benefit)

Innst. O. nr. 19 (2005-2006) (recommendation to the Storting): Innstilling fra familie- og kulturkomiteen om lov om endringer i kontantstøtteloven mv.

Innst.S. nr. 200 (1997-1998) (proposition to the Storting): Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om innføring av kontantstøtte til småbarnsforeldre.

Innst.S. nr. 94 (2001-2002) (proposition to the Storting): Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om evaluering av kontantstøtten.

Ot.prp. nr. 56 (1997-98) (proposition to the Odelsting): Om lov om kontantstøtte til småbarnsforeldre (kontantstøtteloven)

Ot.prp. nr. 71 (1998-99) (proposition to the Odelsting): Om lov om endringer i kontantstøtteloven og folketrygdloven.

St.tid (1996-1997a): Parliamentary debate, 21. November 1996, Sak nr. 1 - Innstilling fra familie,- kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om bevilgninger på statsbudsjettet for 1997 vedkommende Finans- og tolldepartementet, Kulturdepartementet, Sosial- og helsedepartementet, Barne- og familiedepartementet og Administrasjonsdepartementet, og forslag fra stortingsrepresentant Erling Folkvord på vegne av Rød Valgallianse, vedrørende en støtteordning for norske multimediaprosjekter, oversendt fra Stortinget 31. oktober 1996.
St.tid (1996-1997b): Parliamentary debate, 18. December 1996, Sak nr. 14 - Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om forslag fra stortingsrepresentantene Valgerd Svarstad Haugland, Solveig Sollie og Lars Sponheim om et omsorgstillegg til barnetrygden (kontantstøtteordning).

St.tid (1997-1998): Parliamentary debate, 10. June 1998, Sak nr. 1 og 2 - 1) Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om innføring av kontantstøtte til småbarnsforeldre

St.tid (2001-2002a): Parliamentary debate, 18. April 2002, Sak nr. 8 - Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om evaluering av kontantstøtten.

St.tid (2005-2006): Parliamentary debate, 13. December 2005, Sak nr 2 - Innstilling fra familie- og kulturkomiteen om lov om endringer i kontantstøtteloven mv.

St.tid (2007-2008): Parliamentary debate, 12. December 2007, Sak nr. 1 - Innstilling fra familie- og kulturkomiteen om bevilgninger på statsbudsjettet for 2008, kapitler under Barne- og likestillingsdepartementet, Kultur- og kirkedepartementet og Kunnskapsdepartementet (rammeområdene 2 og 3).

St.meld. (White Paper) nr. 43 (2000-2001): Om evaluering av kontantstøtten.

St.prp. nr. 53 (1997-98) (proposition to the Storting): Innføring av kontantstøtte til småbarnsforeldre.

St.prp. nr. 29 (2005-2006): Om lov om endringer i kontantstøtteloven mv.

Documents for barnehage (childcare):

Innst.S. nr. 238 (2000-2001) (proposition to the Storting): Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om forslag fra stortingsrepresentantene Kristin Halvorsen og Ågot Valle om maksimalgrenser for oppholdsbetaling i barnehage og skolefritidsordning og rett til barnehageplass for alle barn.

Ot.prp. nr. 72 (2004-2005): Om lov om barnehager (barnehageloven).

Ot.prp. nr. 76 (2002-2003): Om lov om endringer i lov 5. mai 1995 nr. 19 om barnehager (barnehageloven).

St.tid. (1999-2000): Parliamentary debate, 9. June 2002, Debatt i Stortinget - Møte fredag den 9. juni kl. 9 2000 Sak nr. 2 - Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om barnehage til beste for barn og foreldre.

St.tid. (2000-2001a): Parliamentary debate, 31. May 2001, Sak nr. 7 - Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om forslag fra stortingsrepresentantene Kristin Halvorsen og Ågot Valle om maksimalgrenser for oppholdsbetaling i barnehage og skolefritidsordning og rett til barnehageplass for alle barn.

St.tid. (2000-2001b): Parliamentary debate, 13. December 2001, Sak nr. 1 - Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om bevilgninger på statsbudsjettet for 2001 vedkommende rammeområde 1 Arbeids- og administrasjonsdepartementet, Finans- og tolldepartementet og Sosial- og helsedepartementet, rammeområde 2 Barne- og familiedepartementet og rammeområde 3 Kulturdepartementet.

St.tid. (2001-2002b): Parliamentary debate, 17. June 2002, Sak nr. 9 - Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om forslag fra stortingsrepresentantene Carl I Hagen,

Kristin Halvorsen, Siv Jensen og Øystein Djupedal om maksimalsats for oppholdsbetaling i barnehager.

St.tid. (2002-2003): Parliamentary debate, 16. June 2003, Sak nr. 60 - Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om barnehagetilbud til alle - økonomi, mangfold og valgfrihet.

St.tid. (2003-2004): Parliamentary debate, 2. April 2004, Sak nr. 5 - Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om søskenmoderasjon i foreldrebetalingen m.m.

St.tid (2004-2005a): Parliamentary debate, 10. June 2005, debatt i Odelstinget – møte fredag den 10. juni kl. 11.42. 2005, Sak nr. 1 - Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om lov om barnehager (barnehageloven).

St.tid. (2004-2005b): Parliamentary debate, 10. June 2005, Sak nr. 2 - Innstilling fra familie-, kultur- og administrasjonskomiteen om evaluering av maksimalpris i barnehager

St.tid (2005-2006): Parliamentary debate, 8. juni 2006, sak nr. 4, Interpellasjon fra representanten May-Helen Molvær Grimstad til barne- og likestillingsministeren.

St.tid (2006-2007a): Parliamentary debate, 16. April 2007, Sak nr. 1 - Innstilling frå kyrkje-, utdannings- og forskingskomiteen om ... og ingen sto igjen. Tidlig innsats for livslang læring

St.tid (2006-2007b): Parliamentary debate, 13. December 2006, Sak nr. 1 - Innstilling fra familie- og kulturkomiteen om bevilgninger på statsbudsjettet for 2008, kapitler under Barne- og likestillingsdepartementet, Kultur- og kirkedepartementet og Kunnskapsdepartementet (rammeområdene 2 og 3).

St.tid (2007-2008): Parliamentary debate, 12. December 2007, Sak nr. 1 - Innstilling fra familie- og kulturkomiteen om bevilgninger på statsbudsjettet for 2008, kapitler under Barne- og likestillingsdepartementet, Kultur- og kirkedepartementet og Kunnskapsdepartementet (rammeområdene 2 og 3).

St.meld. (White Paper) nr. 27 (1999-2000): Barnehage til beste for barn og foreldre

St.meld. (White Paper) nr. 24 (2002-2003): Barnehagetilbud til alle - økonomi, mangfold og valgfrihet

St.meld. (White Paper) nr. 28 (2003-2004): Om søskenmoderasjon i foreldrebetalingen m.m.

St.meld. (White Paper) nr. 28 (2004-2005): Om evaluering av maksimalpris i barnehager

St.meld. (White Paper) nr. 16 (2006-2007): … og ingen sto igjen. Tidlig innsats for livslang læring

Appendix 5: Quotations in original language

Appendix 5.1: Quotations in original German language from Parliamentary proceedings

Chapter 7:

"(...) we cannot accept to be in the lead regarding childlessness and the one on the bottom across all Europe regarding birth rates and at the same time be the last regarding early childhood care, education and child-raising institutions. Therefore the day-care expansion should have taken place a long time ago" (family minister Renate Schmidt, SPD, Bundesrat 2004a: 434).

"(…), wir dürfen uns nicht damit abfinden, weltweit Spitzenreiter bei der Kinderlosigkeit und europaweit Schlusslicht bei der Geburtenrate zu sein und gleichzeitig Schlusslicht bei den Kinderbetreuungs-, Erziehungs- und Bildungseinrichtungen. Deshalb ist der Ausbau der Kinderbetreuung für die unter Dreijährigen überfällig" (family minister Renate Schmidt, SPD, Bundesrat 2004a: 434).

"We are not only the bottom one in Europe regarding the fertility rate, but also regarding care, education and child-raising institutions" (Renate Schmidt, SPD, Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11194).

"Wir sind nämlich nicht nur Schlusslicht bei der Geburtenrate in Europa, sondern auch bei Betreuungs-, Bildungs- und Erziehungseinrichtungen für Kinder" (Renate Schmidt, SPD, Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11194),

„I am convinced: we will succeed in changing West-Germany's position as a developing country regarding childcare, and in maintaining the good provision in East Germany" (Renate Schmidt, SPD, Deutscher Bundestag 2004m: 12282).

"Ich bin überzeugt: Wir werden es schaffen, dass West-Deutschland nicht Entwicklungsland in Sachen Kinderbetreuung bleibt, und den guten Versorgungsstand in Ostdeutschland erhalten" (Renate Schmidt, SPD, Deutscher Bundestag 2004m: 12282).

"Also in an international comparison, Germany is limping after the development in comparable industrialised countries. In Germany, childcare is an area in which considerable need for modernisation exists" (Deutscher Bundestag 2004h: 24).

„Auch im internationalen Vergleich hinkt Deutschland hinter der Entwicklung in vergleichbaren Industriestaaten her. Die Kinderbetreuung ist ein Feld, auf dem in Deutschland ein erheblicher Modernisierungsbedarf besteht" (Deutscher Bundestag 2004h: 24).

„One of the most dramatic results of the most recent comparative studies is for me the fact that in Germany more than in any other country the social background decides life and future opportunities for children. We are neglecting early childhood education, thus social inequalities and curtail the future of our children" (Deutscher Bundestag 2004m: 12296).

"Eines der dramatischsten Ergebnisse der internationalen Vergleichsstudien der jüngsten Vergangenheit ist für mich die Tatsache, dass in Deutschland wie in keinem anderen Land Europas die soziale Herkunft über die Lebens- und Zukunftschancen eines Kindes entscheidet. Wir vernachlässigen frühkindliche Bildung, zementieren so soziale Ungleichheiten und verengen damit die Zukunftsperspektiven unserer Kinder" (Deutscher Bundestag 2004m: 12296).

"We are spending more money than others and are still less successful because we have focused too much on benefits in kind and too little on extending infrastructure" (Deutscher Bundestag 2004m: 12283).

„Wir geben mehr Geld als andere aus und sind dennoch weniger erfolgreich, weil wir zu sehr auf materielle Leistungen und zu wenig auf den Ausbau der Infrastrukturen gesetzt haben" (Deutscher Bundestag 2004m: 12283).

“Family yields profit” (Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11193).

„Familie bringt Gewinn” (Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11193)

„make the results of the OECD study „Starting Strong“ for Germany available for the German Bundestag and to help the Länder, municipalities and providers of services in the implementation of the OECD recommendations“ (Deutscher Bundestag 2004a: 5).

„die Ergebnisse der OECD-Studie „Starting Strong“ für Deutschland dem Deutschen Bundestag und der Öffentlichkeit zeitnah zugänglich zu machen und zusammen mit Ländern, Gemeinden und freien Trägern an der Umsetzung der OECD-Vorschläge mitzuwirken“ (Deutscher Bundestag 2004a: 5).

“Research proves that the rate of return for every Euro spent for small children is above average. Motivated and well-educated workers constitute a benefit for each firm. The potential of well-educated young men and women should be exploited. Childcare and early education are a locational advantage, both in international comparisons and between municipalities. That means economic growth. That is active economic policy, (...)” (Caren Marks, SPD, Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11208).

„Wissenschaftlich ist belegt, dass sich gerade bei den Kleinkindern jeder eingesetzte Euro überdurchschnittlich rentiert. Motivierte und gut ausgebildete Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter sind ein Gewinn für jede Firma. Das Potenzial gut ausgebildeter junger Frauen und Männer ist gleichermaßen zu nutzen. Kinderbetreuung und frühe Förderung sind ein Standortvorteil, und zwar sowohl im kommunalen als auch im internationalen Vergleich. Das bedeutet Wirtschaftswachstum. Das ist aktive Wirtschaftspolitik, (...)“ (Caren Marks, SPD, Deutscher Bundestag 2004i: 11208).

„The benefit of childcare facilities and childminders for the economy is similarly underrated. Substantial income and savings are to be expected for public budgets if mothers wanting to can work due to a better infrastructure of childcare. Second, positions in the area of childcare facilities are created and within childminding persons become self-employed. Third, with a better infrastructure of childcare lone parents formerly dependent on social assistance can work. In West Germany, 70 percent of non-working mothers with children up to 12 years wants to work. They fail because of insufficient childcare provision. If we improve reconciliation of work and family life we can increase the female employment rate and influence the development of births positively through improved conditions for families. An increased female employment rate and positive development of births have immediate effects on the social security schemes. Just the increased female employment rate to the level of our Scandinavian neighbours would reduce the problems due to the demographic development of the pay-as-you-go financed pensions insurance substantially” (Deutscher Bundestag 2004c: 2, Antrag FDP).

”Der volkswirtschaftliche Nutzen von Kindertageseinrichtungen und Tagespflege wird ebenfalls unterschätzt. Erhebliche Einnahme- und Einspareffekte für die öffentlichen Haushalte sind zu erwarten, wenn erstens erwerbswillige Mütter dank einer besseren Kinderbetreuungsinfrastruktur einer Erwerbstätigkeit nachgehen können. Zweitens werden im Bereich der Kindertageseinrichtungen Arbeitsplätze geschaffen oder in der Tagespflege selbständige Existenzen gegründet. Drittens können bisher auf Sozialhilfe angewiesene Alleinerziehende ebenfalls bei besserer Kinderbetreuung erwerbstätig sein. InWestdeutschland wünschen sich fast 70 Prozent der nichterwerbstätigen Mütter mit Kindern bis zu 12 Jahren die Aufnahme einer Erwerbstätigkeit. Sie scheitern am mangelhaften Kinderbetreuungsangebot. Wenn wir Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Erwerbsarbeit verbessern, können wir die Erwerbsquote von Frauen erhöhen und durch die Verbesserung der Rahmenbedingungen für Familien tendenziell positiv auf die Geburtenentwicklung einwirken. Die Erhöhung der Frauenerwerbsquote wie eine positive Geburtenentwicklung haben unmittelbare Wirkung für die sozialen Sicherungssysteme. Schon allein eine Steigerung der Frauenerwerbsquote auf das Niveau unserer skandinavischen Nachbarn würde die mit der demographischen Entwicklung verbundenen Finanzprobleme in der umlagefinanzierten Rentenversicherung spürbar abschwächen” (Deutscher Bundestag 2004c: 2, Antrag FDP).

„Although Germany is in the upper third among European countries regarding benefits in cash, these benefits comparatively have not had satisfying effects” (Deutscher Bundestag 2006d: 1).

„Obwohl Deutschland mit den finanziellen Leistungen für Familien im oberen Drittel der Rangfolge der europäischen Staaten liege, hätten diese Leistungen im Vergleich keine zufrieden stellende Wirkung entfaltet“ (Deutscher Bundestag 2006d: 1).

“Although we in Germany spend and provide more than 100 billion Euro on family policy benefits, we have one of the lowest birth rates in Europe” (Ina Lenke, FDP, Deutscher Bundestag 2006e: 3711).
“Obwohl in Deutschland mehr als 100 Milliarden Euro für Leistungen für Familien ausgegeben und erbracht werden, haben wir in Europa eine der niedrigsten Geburtenraten“ (Ina Lenke, Deutscher Bundestag 2006e: 3711).

“Looking at countries like Sweden, where Elterngeld was introduced about ten years ago, one must note that childcare facilities also were very incomplete. Only the Elterngeld and the connected discussion has given the necessary push towards a comprehensive expansion of childcare facilities, and we all know who is primary responsible for that. It was very interesting to observe in the last weeks and months, how this discussion in the meantime has also started here and with full intensity. It is no longer discussed whether we need childcare facilities at all, but instead only how and when we can offer this to all children” (Deutscher Bundestag 2006e: 3712).

„Wenn man sich Länder anschaut wie Schweden, wo das Elterngeld vor rund 10 Jahren eingeführt worden ist, muss man feststellen, dass die Kinderbetreuung damals auch dort noch sehr lückenhaft war. Erst das Elterngeld und die Diskussion darüber haben den entscheidenden Schub zu einem flächendeckenden Ausbau der Kinderbetreuung gebracht, von dem wir alle wissen, wer für ihn die primäre Verantwortung hat. Es war ganz interessant, in den letzten Wochen und Monaten zu beobachten, wie diese Diskussion inzwischen auch bei uns eingesetzt hat, und zwar mit voller Vehemenz. Es wird gar nicht mehr darüber diskutiert, ob wir überhaupt Kinderbetreuung brauchen, sondern nur noch, wie und wann wir sie für alle Kinder ermöglichen können“ (Deutscher Bundestag 2006e: 3712).

“From 2013 a monthly payment, for instance a cash-for-care benefit, will be introduced for parents who do not want to or cannot let their children be cared for in a childcare institution” (Deutscher Bundestag 2008c: 3).

„Ab 2013 soll für diejenigen Eltern, die ihre Kinder von ein bis drei Jahren nicht in Tageseinrichtungen betreuen lassen wollen oder können, eine monatliche Zahlung (zum Beispiel Betreuungsgeld) eingeführt werden“ (Deutscher Bundestag 2008c: 3).

“Only common standards across the country enable the mobility expected from parents in today’s working life. Therefore, an offer of qualified childcare meeting demand all over the Federal Republic of Germany is a central prerequisite for the attractiveness of Germany as an industrial location in today's globalised economy” (Deutscher Bundestag 2008c: 12).

„Nur einheitliche Basisnormen im Bundesgebiet schaffen die Voraussetzungen für die Mobilität, die von den Eltern heute im Arbeitsleben erwartet wird. Deshalb ist ein bedarfsgerechtes Angebot an qualifizierter Tagesbetreuung in allen Teilen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland heute eine zentrale Voraussetzung für die Attraktivität Deutschlands als Wirtschaftsstandort in einer globalisierten Wirtschaftsordnung“ (Deutscher Bundestag 2008c: 12).

“When a country like Sweden from July this year is providing support in the amount of approx. € 300 for families which care for children between one and three at home – no one would claim that Sweden is a backward country or a country without social political responsibility – then this shows us that we are on the right way with our Betreuungsgeld” (Bundesrat 2008: 180).

“Wenn ein Land wie beispielsweise Schweden ab Juli dieses Jahres Familien, die Kinder im Alter zwischen einem Jahr und drei Jahren zu Hause betreuen, mit ca. 300 Euro monatlich unterstützt – niemand wird sagen, dass Schweden ein rückständiges Land sei oder ein Land ohne hohe sozialpolitische Verantwortung –, dann zeigt das, dass wir mit der Verankerung des Betreuungsgeldes genau den richtigen Weg gehen“ (Bundesrat 2008: 180).

Appendix 5.2: Quotations in original Norwegian language from Parliamentary proceedings

Chapter 8:

“We are actually on the top in Europe regarding benefits in cash and we will not abolish such arrangements. But what we have said in the acknowledgement that we are almost at the bottom regarding services in kind, (…), is that our priority towards year 2000 must be (…) the provision of childcare to an affordable price” (St.tid.1996-1997: 1813).

”Vi ligger faktisk også på europatoppen når det gjelder kontantstøtte, og vi har ikke tenkt å fjerne den ordninga. Men det vi videre har sagt i erkjennelsen av at vi ligger nesten på bunnen når det gjelder overføringer til tjenester - i dette tilfellet barnehager, (…) er at vår hovedprioritet fram mot år 2000 nå må være å greie å sikre alle foreldre, (…), et tilbud om barnehageplass til en pris som folk har råd til å betale” (St.tid.1996-1997: 1813).

“(…) other countries practically flock to Norway to see and learn what we have done within gender equality” (Espen Johnsen, DNA, St.tid. 2007-2008: 1380).

“(…) andre land nærast valfartar til Noreg for å sjå og lære av kva vi har gjort på likestillingsområdet, …” (Espen Johnsen, DNA, St.tid. 2007-2008: 1380).

“The report calls attention to how Norway has a substantially lower number of pedagogues than countries which are natural to compare with. In Sweden, Denmark and Finland two thirds of the employees are educated pedagogues whereas the corresponding number in Norway is about one third (Early Childhood Education and Care in Norway, Country Note, OECD 1999)” (Ot.prp. nr. 72 (2004-2005): 98).

”Rapporten påpeker imidlertid at Norge har en betydelig lavere pedagogtetthet enn land det er naturlig å sammenlikne seg med. I Sverige, Danmark og Finland er to tredjedeler av personalet utdannede pedagoger, mens det tilsvarende tallet i Norge er omtrent en tredjedel (Early Childhood Education and Care in Norway, Country Note, OECD 1999)” (Ot.prp. nr. 72 (2004-2005): 98).

“International regulations and recommendations must be taken into consideration in Norwegian childcare policy. (…) the education-political trends we witness in the EU, OECD and in Europe, must have consequences for our childcare policy and our control of and attention to the childcare sector” (BFD 2005: 22).

”Internasjonale føringer og anbefalinger må vurderes og tas hensyn til i den norske barnehagepolitikken. (…) de utdanningspolitiske trendene som vi ser i EU, OECD og i Europa for øvrig, må få konsekvenser for vår barnehagepolitikk og vår styring av og oppmerksomhet om barnehagesektoren” (BFD 2005: 22).

“Norway and the other Nordic countries are reviewed positively by OECD experts. (…) However, in the opinion of the OECD, Norway has high parental fees, no age groups are entitled to free places, many still have no childcare place, the proportion of trained teachers is low and there is little long term research (OECD 1999). Furthermore, it is presumed that the Christian objects clause could be a challenge for children with a different religious background. Since 1999 many more children have received a childcare place, the municipalities are obliged to provide childcare places, the parental fee is reduced with the maximal price, and research is strengthened. Moreover, the objects clauses of the Day Care Institutions Act and Education Act are being evaluated by the Bostadutvalg (*Bostad-commission, my addition*). Norway and other Nordic countries are also reviewed positively in the OECD-report Starting Strong II (OECD 2006d). At the same time it is commented that Norway is the only Nordic country without a legal right to childcare places” (St.meld. nr. 16 2006-2007: 19, my translation).

”Norge, og de øvrige nordiske land, har fått god omtale av OECDs eksperter. (…) Etter OECDs syn hadde Norge imidlertid høy foreldrebetaling, ingen aldersgrupper har rett til gratis tilbud, mange hadde fortsatt ikke barnehageplass, det er lav pedagogtetthet og lite langsiktig forskning. Videre ble det antatt at den kristne formålsbestemmelsen kunne være en utfordring når det gjelder barn med en annen religiøs bakgrunn. Siden 1999 har mange flere barn fått barnehageplass, kommunene har fått en lovfestet plikt til å sørge for barnehageplasser, foreldrebetalingen er blitt lavere med maksimalpris, og det blir satset mer på forskning. Videre blir barnehagelovens og opplæringslovens formålsbestemmelser vurdert av et nylig nedsatt utvalg, Bostadutvalget.

Norge og de øvrige nordiske landene får også god omtale i OECD-rapporten Starting Strong II. Det pekes samtidig på at Norge er det eneste landet i Norden der det ikke er lovfestet rett til barnehageplass" (St.meld. nr. 16 2006-2007: 19).

"Dette viser at Barnehageløftet med satsning på full dekning og kvalitet i barnehagene er riktig. Det finnes fortsatt utfordringer, men det er betryggende å se at Norge er i tet på barnehageområdet" (KD 2006b).

"This shows that our childcare promise emphasizing full coverage and quality in kindergartens is right. There are still challenges, but it is reassuring to see that Norway is in the lead within childcare" (KD 2006b).

"The maximum price is inspired by a similar arrangement in Sweden, which has been an outstanding success. Here all Swedish parents and parties take a positive attitude towards the maximum price and would not think of removing it. Our hope and belief is that using a maximum price in a couple of years will be just as obvious in Norway as it is in Sweden today, simply because this is the only guarantee that parents profit from our efforts" (St.tid. 2002-2003: 3277).

"Maksimalprisen er inspirert av en tilsvarende ordning i Sverige, som har vært en enestående suksess. Der står alle svenske foreldre og alle partier bak maksimaltaksten og vil ikke tenke på å ta den bort. Vårt håp og vår tro er at maksimalpris som virkemiddel i løpet av et par år vil være akkurat like selvfølgelig i Norge som den i dag er i Sverige, simpelthen fordi det er den eneste garantien vi har for at foreldrene får gevinsten av den satsingen vi gjør" (St.tid. 2002-2003: 3277).

Appendix 5.3: Quotations in original German language from official documents

Chapter 4:

“All parties have in principle taken a positive attitude towards the aim of Family minister Ursula von der Leyen of preparing another 500 000 childcare places for children less than three years old within 2013. Consequently the European standard on childcare centres is met, the minister emphasized in connection with the decision of the Bundestag” (BMFSFJ 2007).

„Im Grundsatz haben sich alle Parteien hinter das Ziel von Bundesfamilienministerin Ursula von der Leyen gestellt, zusätzliche 500.000 Betreuungsplätze für die unter Dreijährigen bis zum Jahr 2013 bereitzustellen. Damit lasse sich der europäische Standard beim Angebot an Krippenplätzen erreichen, betonte die Ministerin anlässlich des Bundestagsbeschlusses“ (BMFSFJ 2007).

Chapter 7:

“Family friendliness is a substantial positive growth factor” (NRP 2005: 50).

”Familienfreundlichkeit ist ein wesentlicher positiver Wachstums-faktor“ (NRP 2005: 50).

“Germany follows the Swedish ideal” (BMFSFJ 2006a: 8).

“Deutschland folgt damit dem schwedischen Vorbild” (BMFSFJ 2006a: 8)

Chapter 9:

”I have spoken about family policy in a distant manner and from an economic perspective. I do that because I want to liberate family policy from the dubious reputation of a soft, female topic. I do that because companies in difficult times are best convinced by hard economic facts. Family policy is the central socio-political topic, an important educational and economical topic, in one word: Family policy is politics for the future” (Schmidt 2004a: 5)

„Ich habe jetzt die ganze Zeit sehr distanziert und vor allem aus der ökonomischen Sicht über Familie gesprochen. Ich tue das, weil ich Familienpolitik aus dem Ruch eines WW - eines weichen Weiber-"Themas" - befreien möchte. Ich tue das, weil in schwierigen wirtschaftlichen Zeiten Unternehmen am besten durch harte ökonomische Fakten zu überzeugen sind. Familienpolitik ist das zentrale gesellschaftspolitische Thema, ein wichtiges bildungspolitisches und ein wichtiges ökonomisches Thema, mit einem Wort: Familienpolitik ist Zukunftspolitik“ (Schmidt 2004a: 5).

Appendix 5.4: Quotations in original Norwegian language from official documents

Chapter 8:

“In general, it is an interesting characteristic of the development [*a mistake in the original source; “exchange” (utveksling) is written instead of “development” (utvikling)*] that the EU seeks good practice for the establishment of a sustainable “European welfare state” which at the same time ensures competitiveness and where the combination of high employment, social security and high fertility is possible. The Nordic countries stand out positively. Norway is an interesting case and a potential conversation partner for policy development. This has allowed the minister to participate in the political debate during the informal ministerial meetings with colleagues from member countries, applicant countries and EFTA/EEA countries. The debate is interesting and useful in itself, but at the same time it gives good profiling and good reputation for Norway as a country leading the way. Speaking from experience; the better prepared, the better results in terms of being able to ensure that our interests are taken seriously, gain influence for [*a mistake in the original source; “gets” is written instead of “for”*] our ideas, establish new connections and collaborators, be consulted later in the process and regarding future participation in EU informal ministerial meetings” (BLD: 2007b: 23).

”Generelt er det et interessant utvekslingstrekk [*a mistake in the original source; “exchange” (utveksling) is written instead of “development” (utvikling)*]at EU søker etter gode eksempler for innretningen av en bæredyktig "Europeiske velferdsstat", som samtidig ivaretar konkurranseevnen og hvor kombinasjonen av høy sysselsetting, sosial sikkerhet og høy fertilitet er mulig. De nordiske land peker seg positivt ut. Norge utgjør et interessant case og en potensiell samtalepartner for politikkutvikling. Dette har medført at statsråden har kunnet delta i den politiske debatt under de uformelle ministermøtene med kollegaer fra medlemslandene, søkerlandene og EFTA/EØS-landene. Debatten er i seg selv interessant og nyttig, men gir samtidig god profilering og godt omdømme av Norge som et foregangsland. Erfaringen viser at jo bedre forberedt vi er - jo større er vårt utbytte når det gjelder - å kunne medvirke til at våre interesser blir tatt alvorlig, få gjennomslag får [*a mistake in the original source; “gives” is written instead of “for”*] våre ideer, få nye kontakter og samarbeidspartnere, bli tatt med på råd senere i prosessen og når det gjelder deltagelse på fremtidige uformelle ministermøter i EUs regi” (BLD: 2007b: 23).

Appendix 5.5: Quotations in original German language from newspapers

Chapter 1:

“Family is in. Reading the newspaper or watching television, it is almost impossible to avoid the flood of ideas which are presented, considered, rejected and presented again. Parental leave benefit. Cash-for-care. Childcare coverage. Tax splitting” (Der Spiegel special 2007a: 7).

”Familie ist in. Wer die Zeitung aufschlägt oder vorm Fernseher sitzt, kann dem Schwall der Ideen, die vorgestellt, begutachtet, verworfen und neu präsentiert werden, kaum entgehen. Elterngeld. Betreuungsgeld. Krippenplätze. Ehegattensplitting“(Der Spiegel special 2007a: 7).

Chapter 4:

“The OECD welcomed measures such as the Elterngeld introduced in January 2007 and the planned extension of childcare facilities. However, cash benefits like the cash-for-care allowance, due in 2013, were criticized. The effects are often ´disastrous`. It disposes of work incentives” (FAZ 2007a).

”Die OECD begrüßte zugleich Maßnahmen wie das im Januar 2007 eingeführte Elterngeld und den geplanten Ausbau der Kinderbetreuung. Transferleistungen wie das für 2013 geplante Betreuungsgeld werden dagegen kritisiert. Die Effekte seien „oft desaströs“. Sie zerstörten die Anreize zur Arbeitsaufnahme” (FAZ 2007a).

Chapter 8:

„Angela Merkel tries to calm critics to her left and right by giving something to all: Yes to extension of childcare. Yes to a legal right for a childcare place. Yes to a cash-for-care benefit for families preferring to raise their children at home. Stop nagging – there is enough for all, is the slogan“ (FAZ 2007b).

„Angela Merkel versucht die Kritiker zu ihrer Linken und Rechten zu beruhigen, indem sie allen nachgibt: Ja zum Ausbau der Krippenplätze. Ja zum Rechtsanspruch auf einen Betreuungsplatz. Ja zum Betreuungsgeld für die Familien, die ihre Kinder zu Hause aufziehen wollen. Nicht drängeln - es ist genug für alle da, lautet das Motto“ (FAZ 2007b).

Appendix 5.6: Quotations in original Norwegian language from newspapers

Chapter 4:

”In fact, the success of private companies is now in many ways related to good family policy. Therefore we have become an export article on the same level as oil, gas and tourism, says Arni Hole“ (Aftenposten 13.10.2007).

"Det er faktisk sånn nå at bedriftsøkonomisk suksess på mange måter henger sammen med god familiepolitikk. Derfor er vi blitt en eksportartikkel på linje med olje, gass og turisme, sier Arni Hole" (Aftenposten 13.10.2007).

Chapter 8:

“Germany wishes to adopt our vision; redistribution of work, care and power between the sexes” (Aftenposten 13.10.2007).

“Tyskland ønsker å adoptere vår visjon; omfordeling av arbeid, omsorg og makt mellom kjønnene” (Aftenposten 13.10.2007).

Appendix 6: Examples of possible EU and OECD peer pressure

Chapter 5 EU: Example of mechanism 1 and 4: peer pressure and learning

Difference of employment rate for women with and without children*

	2005
EU25	14.2
EU15	13.2
EU10	19.5
BE	2.1
CZ	39.2
DK	3.4
DE	26.5
EE	30.0
EL	3.5
ES	7.5
FR	10.2
IE	18.2
IT	6.8
CY	3.4
LV	18.0
LT	2.8
LU	7.0
HU	35.3
MT	17.2
NL	9.4
AT	14.4
PL	11.1
PT	-3.8
SI	-1.5
SK	34.5
FI	17.5
UK	21.2

* Difference in employment rates for women with children under 6 and women without children (age group 20-50).
Source: EU Labour Force Survey – Spring data, LU 2003, 2004 and 2005: Annual average data. Data not available for SE.

Source: European Commission (2007) Promoting solidarity between the generations, p. 14.

Chapter 5 EU: Example of mechanism 1 and 4: peer pressure and learning

Inactivity rates of women, in %, 2006

			25-54 years old		
	15-64 years old	15-24 years old	Total	Due to family responsibilities	55-64 years old
EU27	**37.1**	**59.4**	**23.6**	**10.2**	**62.9**
Belgium	40.5	68.1	23.0	10.1	75.4
Bulgaria	39.8	73.6	20.6	7.7	66.1
Czech Republic	37.7	70.8	18.7	12.4	66.0
Denmark	23.0	30.7	14.6	2.3	43.3
Germany	30.5	52.2	18.6	9.9	52.7
Estonia	30.7	69.4	14.3	8.5	39.5
Ireland	38.7	52.2	29.5	23.1	59.2
Greece	45.0	71.3	30.9	18.8	72.0
Spain	40.0	55.9	28.8	18.2	69.6
France	35.9	65.4	19.8	4.9	63.0
Italy	49.2	73.1	35.7	15.2	77.5
Cyprus	36.2	61.7	22.6	18.3	62.2
Latvia	33.4	66.4	17.1	8.8	48.4
Lithuania	35.4	76.9	16.2	7.1	52.4
Luxembourg	41.8	75.0	26.3	21.7	71.5
Hungary	44.5	76.6	27.1	11.6	71.8
Malta	61.7	50.9	58.9	45.9	88.4
Netherlands	29.7	31.6	20.4	8.3	60.7
Austria	33.0	44.9	19.1	12.8	73.1
Poland	43.2	69.3	24.6	12.0	79.7
Portugal	31.6	61.3	17.3	8.7	54.9
Romania	43.4	74.1	27.4	11.7	65.2
Slovenia	33.2	63.6	13.0	3.9	78.6
Slovakia	39.1	69.1	18.8	11.4	79.1
Finland	25.0	39.2	14.6	6.2	42.8
Sweden	23.7	48.1	13.7	2.1	30.4
United Kingdom	30.8	41.6	22.1	1.9	49.9
Croatia	43.1	68.4	24.8	11.0	73.1
Turkey	73.9	76.3	71.5	62.6	83.2
Iceland	16.6	19.7	15.2	3.2	18.8
Norway	25.2	42.1	16.7	2.7	37.8
Switzerland	25.3	32.9	18.8	13.7	41.4

1. Inactive persons are persons who are neither employed nor unemployed. Inactivity rate is the share of the inactive population as a % of the total population (living in private households) in the same age group.
2. Family responsibilities may include marriage, pregnancy, childcare, serious illness of another member of the family, long vacation. Own illness is not included.
3. Eurostat, Statistics in focus, 122/2007 "People outside the labour force: the downward trend continues". Available free of charge in PDF format on the Eurostat website.

Source: Eurostat news release (2007): Women outside the labour force in 2006: One woman in ten aged 25-54 in the EU27 is inactive due to family responsibilities. 169/2007 - 6 December 2007. My own emphasis of Germany and Norway.

Chapter 6 OECD: Example of mechanism 1: Country recommendations

Box 1.2. Family-friendly policy recommendations for Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom (cont.)

Finland

The simultaneous provision of a childcare guarantee and Home Care Allowance payments to parents who do not use municipal childcare support, increases choice to parents with children not yet 3 years of age. However, given the level (some municipalities provide additional payments) and duration of payments, it is no surprise that many parents of very young children, usually mothers, are not in paid work. This reduces female earnings profiles and hampers the pursuit of gender equity objectives. Moreover, the system of Home Care Allowances holds back labour supply growth, while projections point to emerging labour supply concerns. For these reasons, policy should consider reform options limiting benefit payments and/or duration.

To contribute to the long-term financial viability of the childcare system, maintain where possible, the role of family day-care services as such services are less costly than centre-based care services. Explore opportunities to extend out-of-school-hours care entitlements to children aged 9-10.

To encourage part-time work, reform the current partial care payments for parents with children up to school age into a part-time work entitlement of two years, and use current funding to finance benefit payments during this period.

Sweden

To contribute to the long-term financial viability of the childcare system, maintain where possible, the role of family day-care services, as such services are less costly than centre-based care services.

Take measures aimed at reducing the differences in the use of parental leave between men and women by, for example, granting a bonus to parents who equally share parental leave entitlements, increasing the duration of leave periods that are non-transferable between the parents, and/or increasing information to both parents about fathers' rights to parental leave.

To give employers due notice on the return of their employees, consider increasing the notice period for parents on parental leave to approximately two months.

Source: OECD 2005: 14

Chapter 6 OECD: Example of mechanism 2: A figure comparing Norway's achievements on several family policy related indicators with other OECD members;

Figure 1: Babies and Bosses - Key Outcomes of Norway compared to OECD average

Source: Key Outcomes of countries compared to OECD average, available at http://www.oecd.org/document/45/0,3343,en_2649_34819_39651501_1_1_1_1,00.html, retrieved 10.05.2008.

Chapter 6 OECD: Example of mechanism 2: Ranking of childcare participation rates;

Chart 6.2. For children aged three and over childcare participation rates are generally high

Countries are ranked in descending order of 3 to 5 year old enrolment rates

Source: OECD Family database and OECD Education database.

	3 - 5 years	0 - 3 years	
France	101,9	28,0	
Italy	100,3	6,3	
Belgium	99,6	33,6	
Spain	98,6	20,7	
Iceland	94,7	58,7	
New Zealand	92,7	32,1	
Denmark	89,7	61,7	
Hungary	86,9	6,9	
Sweden	86,6	39,5	
Japan	86,4	15,2	
Czech Republic	85,3	3,0	
Norway	85,1	43,7	
United Kingdom	80,5	25,8	
Germany	80,3	9,0	
Portugal	77,9	23,5	
Austria	74,0	6,6	
Slovak Republic	72,4	17,7	
Luxembourg	72,3	14,0	
Australia	71,5	29,0	
Netherlands	70,2	29,5	
Ireland	68,2	15,0	
Mexico	64,9	3,0	
United States	62,0	35,5	
Korea	60,9	19,5	
Greece	46,8	7,0	
Finland	46,1	*22,4*	*revised figure (February 2008)*
Switzerland	44,8		
Poland	36,2	2,0	
Turkey	10,5		
Canada	m	19,0	

Source: Babies and Bosses - Reconciling Work and Family Life (Vol. 5): A Synthesis of Findings for OECD Countries. Selection of tables and charts available at www.oecd.org/els/social/family, retrieved 05.05.2008. Year of data is not given, but the ranking seems to be a combination of two charts relying on data mainly from 2004. I have emphasized my two cases are in red.